

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

SOUTHEAST ASIA

FEBRUARY 2016

PLUS
SACRED TIBET
ASIAN SPAS
MANILA NIGHTS

*SINGAPORE'S
STYLISH
STAYS*

ISSN 1906-0823



9 771906 082018
TravelandLeisureAsia.com

SINGAPORE S\$7.90 / HONG KONG HK\$43
THAILAND TH฿175 / INDONESIA IDR50,000
MALAYSIA MYR18 / VIETNAM VND85,000
MACAU MOP44 / PHILIPPINES PHP240
BURMA MMK35 / CAMBODIA KHR22,000
BRUNEI BND7.90 / LAOS LAK52,000





PATEK PHILIPPE
GENEVE

Begin your own tradition.

You never actually own
a Patek Philippe.

You merely look after it for
the next generation.



Annual Calendar Ref. 5205G

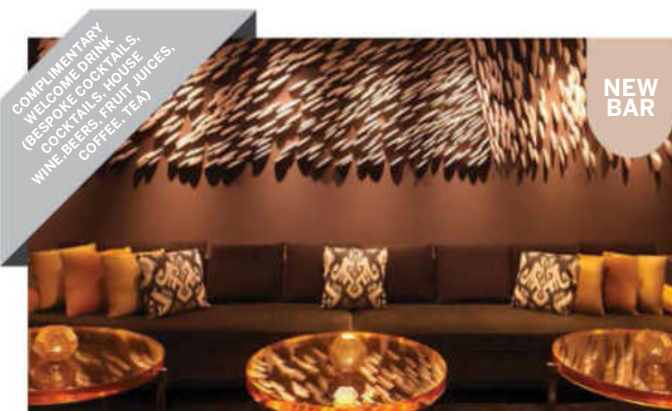
Tel: (65) 6732 1506
patek.com



CHILLAX FIRST ANNIVERSARY

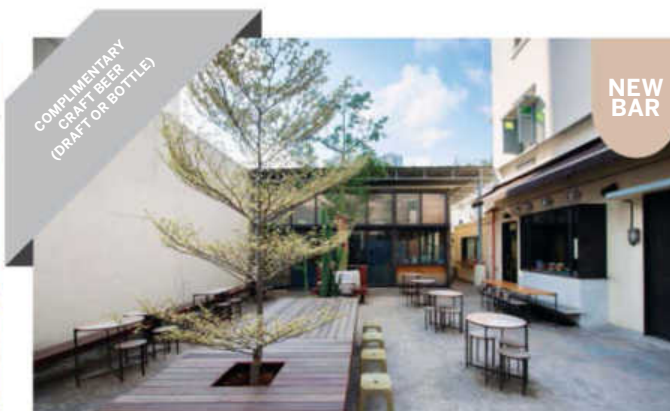
It's our first anniversary of Chillax and we want to celebrate with you, with special benefits at some of Singapore's best bars. Be sure to present your American Express Platinum® Reserve or Platinum Credit Card at the time of order and receive a complimentary drink on us.

For more information, please visit amex.co/Chillax



ANTI:DOTE

Anti:dote is a stylish cocktail bar that appeals to the most discerning taste buds. Combining the craftsmanship of traditional bartending and the artistry of experimental mixology techniques, drinks are crafted with premium spirits and housemade bitters, liqueurs and sodas complement well with innovative modern tapas.



INCOGNITO

iNCOGNiTO is located in Singapore's latest hipster enclave of Jalan Besar. In collaboration with the good folks from Chye Seng Huat Hardware, the hipster coffee bar melds into iNCOGNiTO, a craft beer bar when night falls. Not contented with just craft beers on tap? Look out for their selection of special releases and rare cellared beers!



SHIN GI TAI

A cosy and intimate craft cocktail bar tucked away in the former Catholic High School, alongside the Waterloo Street Arts Belt. Elevate your cocktail experience to an art form with Anthony's precise and elegant Japanese bartending techniques.



WANTON - SENG'S NOODLE BAR

Wanton - Seng's Noodle Bar proudly offers the original Seng's Wonton Mee in a completely modern attitude. For the tippable-ready crowd, Wanton has curated a complementary selection of beverages, featuring signature cocktails and craft beers.

COMPLIMENTARY
BESPOKE COCKTAIL**AH SAM COLD DRINK STALL**

Ah Sam Cold Drink Stall specialises in cocktails inspired by local flavours. Try their Tak-Giu (Milo infusion) or Liang Teh (chrysanthemum, wolf berry) and see why they are the talk of the town.

1-FOR-1 FIRST
DRINKS (BESPOKE
COCKTAILS, COCKTAILS
WINES, HOUSE POUR SPIRITS
AND JUICES)**GEM**

At the intersection of Ann Siang and Club Street, Gem Bar sits in a historic conservation shophouse serving curated drinks, complementing food.

COMPLIMENTARY
BESPOKE COCKTAIL**HORSE'S MOUTH BAR**

Utilizing a range of premium spirits, liqueurs and ingredients, cocktails at the Horse's Mouth Bar are pieces of art and crafted to suit your palate.

COMPLIMENTARY
BESPOKE COCKTAIL**MAISON IKKOKU**

Maison Ikkoku is known for its no-menu bespoke cocktail concept. Master Mixologist Ethan Leslie Leong applies his artistry techniques here.

1-FOR-1 FIRST
DRINKS (BESPOKE
COCKTAILS, COCKTAILS
WINES, HOUSE POUR SPIRITS
AND JUICES)**MANOR**

There's only one rule here: Keep The Guests Happy. Manor offers bespoke cocktails and, to complement the cocktails, a specially designed menu that will please any craving.

1-FOR-1 FIRST
DRINKS (BESPOKE
COCKTAILS, COCKTAILS
WINES, HOUSE POUR SPIRITS
AND JUICES)**:PLUCK**

:pluck credits a good meal to quality ingredients, offering cosmopolitan interpretations of classics that are affordable, creative and delicious.

COMPLIMENTARY
GLASS OF HOUSE WHISKY**THE AULD ALLIANCE**

A beautiful bar in a Heritage Building, the Auld Alliance has an extensive whisky collection with 1,500 labels and a unique range of 40 Absinthes.

COMPLIMENTARY KIRIN
OR PURE BLONDE BEER**THE MAD MEN ATTIC BAR**

Designed in a fun, modern industrialist manner, The Mad Men Attic Bar was configured as the Go-To-Post-Work hideout in Boat Quay with stunning skyline with Marina Bay Sands.

1-FOR-1 ON FIRST
DRINK (BEER, WINE,
COCKTAIL, BESPOKE
COCKTAIL AND TASTING
FLIGHTS)**THE SECRET MERMAID**

The Secret Mermaid is a tasting room focused on American craft spirits and a great place to try exciting spirits such as unique products that range from Bakon Vodka to hand crafted organic spirits.

Terms and Conditions:

- Terms and Conditions apply to all the above mentioned privileges/promotions. Please refer to amex.co/Chillax for more details.
- American Express and the participating merchants reserve the right to change The Terms and Conditions at any time without prior notice. Should there be disputes, the decision of American Express and the participating merchants shall be final.
- You must be at least 18 years of age to consume alcoholic beverages. Individuals with health conditions should consult and heed their doctor's advice before drinking. Drink moderately, responsibly and do not drink and drive.



Personal & Private
PERSONAL & PRIVATE



SALA PHUKET



sala khaoyai



sala rattanakosin



sala lanna



sala ayutthaya

Samui • Phuket • khaoyai • Chiang Mai • Bangkok • Ayutthaya
tel. +66 (0) 2231 2588 | fax. +66 (0) 2231 2589 | www.salahospitality.com

SALA
HOSPITALITY GROUP



features

On the Cover

At The South Beach in Singapore.
Photographer: Pornsak Na Nakorn. Assistant: Eakapol Paroon. Stylist: Saranya Ariyakul. Hair and makeup: Bandit Boonmee. Model: Virahya Pattarachokchai. Wardrobe by Chloé, shoes by Jimmy Choo, Jewelry by Porshz.

72 Ascension Mount Kailash is Asia's most sacred peak. On a personal pilgrimage in western Tibet, *Joe Cummings* heads over the hills where the spirits fly. *Photographed by Thomas Kelly*

82 Behind Closed Doors Manila's cool crowd is climbing down from the club tables and tucking into quiet corners. *Stephanie Zubiri* explains why the trendsetters are sneaking sips secreted away, and acts as our GPS to the city's new night-owl nirvana. *Photographed by Sonny Thakur*

88 The Leading Edge Once considered industrial no-man's-lands, Amsterdam's outskirts have begun to hum with creative energy and, as *Gisela Williams* discovers, shift the center of the city itself. *Photographed by Felix Odell*

98 Heat of the Moment What is it about Palm Springs that keeps drawing waves of pleasure-seekers looking to slow down, drop out, go a little wild? *Irina Aleksander* meets the latest arrivals who are reinventing the desert oasis all over again. *Photographed by Chris McPherson*

108 Testing the Waters For centuries, the search for the Northwest Passage captivated explorers—and led many to their deaths. Today, warming seas have made it possible to traverse the fabled route through the Canadian Arctic. *Saki Knafo* climbs aboard one of the first passenger ships in the region to survey this emerging frontier. *Photographed by Stefan Ruiz*

FROM LEFT: THOMAS KELLY; CHRIS MCPHERSON; FELIX ODELL; STEFAN RUIZ



72



98



88



108

departments

Here & Now

- 19 Singapore's New Style** Three fresh design hotels shine bright in the city-state.
- 24 Hong Kong Bling** Chinese heritage-inspired jewelry by Dickson Yewn.
- 26 Seoul's Salad Days** Vegetarian dining tempts palates in the South Korean capital.
- 30 The Love of Lacquer** Designer Bruno de Caumont revels in a traditional Vietnamese craft.
- 31 Going the Distance** The most striking outdoor running trails around the region.
- Plus** Korean-Mexican fusion fare hits Singapore; salsa the high seas on a dedicated dance-camp cruise; and more.

Beyond

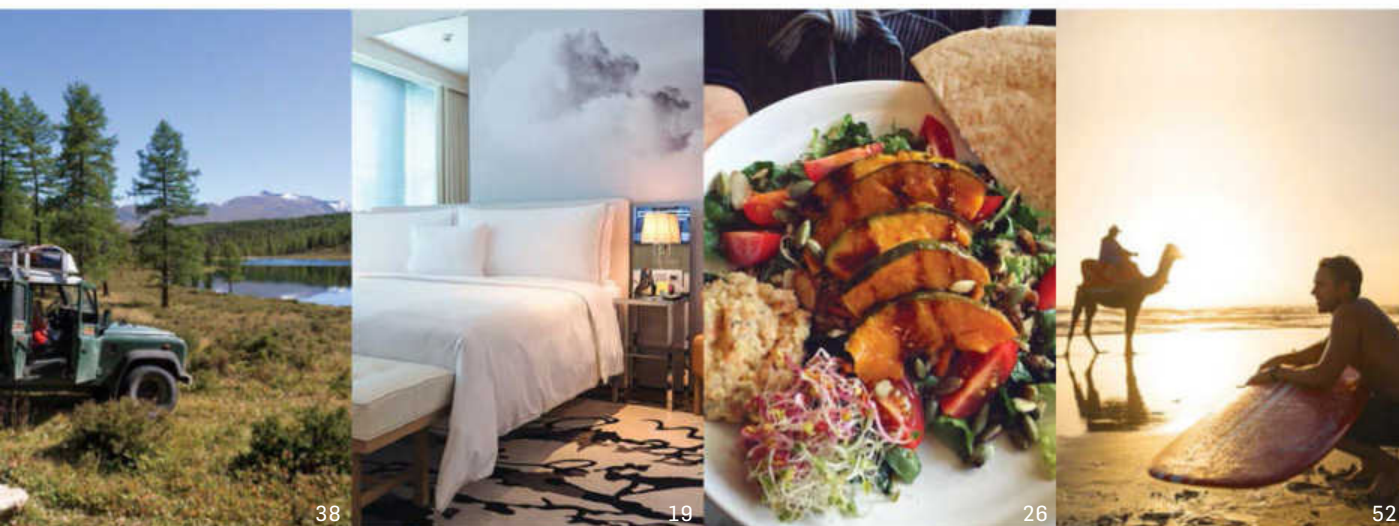
- 33 Riding a Wave** A culinary renaissance in Byron Bay, southeastern Australia.
- 38 Into Altai** An overland adventure during Siberia's brief and beautiful summer.
- 42 Grapes and Gatsby** Napier: New Zealand's Art Deco capital and viticulture birthplace.
- 45 Profoundly Fashionable** Malaysia's most covetable designers, and the diverse philosophies that inspire them.
- 48 Art in the Arctic** Svalbard, Norway, has become an improbable center for art.
- 52 Easy like Essaouira** A lost-in-time seaside retreat and an antidote to busy Marrakesh.

The Guide

- 56 Spas of the Future** From state-of-the-art technologies to hard-to-find holistic healing practices to visually stunning settings, we highlight some of our favorite spas in Asia to recharge body, mind and spirit.

Upgrade

- 63 The Mileage Makeover** Smart ideas for navigating the ins and outs of loyalty programs, plus strategies for maximizing rewards from your well-earned travel points.



FROM LEFT: COLE PENNINGTON; PORNSAK NA NAKORN; COURTESY OF PLANT; TIM E WHITE/GETTY IMAGES



We find the films you love, to make you feel at home.

A truly entertaining journey. There's more to it than just the latest movies. It's about finding culture and experiences from near and far, for you to enjoy. Because we understand that enriching moments make your flight just that much more meaningful. It's just one of the lengths we go to, to make you feel at home.



SCAN TO
DISCOVER MORE



**SINGAPORE
AIRLINES**
A great way to fly

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER





LOOKOUT

The best places to travel in 2016; Lao cuisine with a twist in Luang Prabang; China's rising design stars; the latest travel deals and more.

travandleisureasia.com

THIS MONTH ON TRAVANDLEISUREASIA.COM

FOUR FAVORITE EATERIES OF A FOOD NETWORK HOST

Michele Lean, celebrity foodie, shares her top restaurants from Bangkok to Beijing.

DISCOVER PA-AN, BURMA

A stylish new boutique hotel has shuttled this unspoiled town and its natural surroundings into the spotlight.

THE NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE OPENS

More than simply a grand cultural showcase, the Lion City's most anticipated debut will highlight works by Southeast Asian artists.



DOWNLOAD US

T+L TABLET EDITIONS
Available on iOS, Android,
Win 8 and Zinio Desktop
Reader.

FOLLOW US

TWITTER.COM/
TRAVLEISUREASIA
FACEBOOK.COM/
TRAVELLEISUREASIA
PINTEREST.COM/
TRAVLEISUREASIA
INSTAGRAM.COM/
TRAVANDLEISUREASIA



KEEP UP WITH US

Sign up for our newsletter
for monthly highlights
and offers from
T+L Southeast Asia.

TANDL.ASIA/NEWSLETTER

CONTACT US

TLEDITOR@
MEDIATRANSASIA.COM

RX



THE NEW GENERATION OF LUXURY THE NEW LEXUS RX

Nothing beats the feeling of being one step ahead. Knowing that no matter what is on the horizon, it will soon be in your rearview mirror. Lexus has created a luxury SUV that is unlike any other. Under its stunning, sculpted exterior, the new RX combines V6 power, an upgraded eight-speed automatic transmission, and an interior that will awaken your love for design. In short, all the RX needs is you.

Find out more at lexusasia.com/thenewRX

*Country specifications may differ from the model shown.



1

Joe Cummings

WRITER

Ascension
page 72

After three attempts over 14 years, Cummings finally got a permit for a pilgrimage to Asia's most sacred peak. "That's the thing about Tibet," he says. "The rules are always changing." A member of the only group of foreigners on Mount Kailash that week, he compared their stamina with the locals'. "The Tibetan pilgrims were so at ease with the altitude, since they grew up in the high Himalayas and Trans-Himalayas. I wonder how they'd do at sea level?" Cummings also learned a valuable lesson: "You really can hike 22 kilometers at 5,500 meters on just one boiled egg and a chocolate bar." *Instagram: @joejcumings*

2

Stephanie Zubiri

WRITER

Behind Closed Doors
page 82

We sent the pregnant Zubiri to soberly scout the coolest clandestine bars in Manila. "You feel like a scientist observing specimens. But, armed with some chocolate and good company, it's still fun." Two more trends in her city? Wine bars are coming back, and hipsters, of course: "girls in high-waisted shorts and their bearded boyfriends with drinks in mason jars." Once the baby's born, it's off to The Bonbon Club for delicious gin concoctions, "then I'll be finding myself a spot on the ledge at Revel to dance the night away. I shall be wearing jeans because I'm too old to flash anyone my undies." *Instagram: @stephaniezubiri*

3

Cole Pennington

WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER

Into Altai
page 38

On a summer expedition of Siberia near Mongolia to learn about Pazyryk culture, Pennington got a few history lessons: during World War II, soldiers from the region were Russia's best marksmen, and to this day many young Altai men are military snipers. Or maybe they're just fleeing the stew- and dough-heavy cuisine that includes reindeer, horse and even bear. "It's the kind of food you'd want if it were freezing outside—only it wasn't." Favorite dish? "Fish frozen solid then sliced extremely thin, a style called *straganina*. The fish is served on a block of ice with divots filled with shots of vodka." *Instagram: @cole_pennington*

4

Thomas Kelly

PHOTOGRAPHER

Ascension
page 72

Photographer and filmmaker Kelly has lived in Nepal since his 1978 Peace Corps stint. A must-visit place in Tibet? "Drigung Thil, where you can witness last rites for sky burials." He's made the Kailash kora 14 times. In the 1980s, he lived in Humla, Nepal, with a lama who had spent 26 years meditating in caves. The kora they took "was a silent meditation on the impermanence of life." One dawn on another trek, with an eye on Lake Langak, he recalls sitting "down on the blessed cold earth, hoping one day I might dissolve into rainbow light I saw sparkling in the morning frost." *Instagram: @thomas_kelly1956*



WHERE THE CITY COMES ALIVE

Shangri-La is coming to Bonifacio Global City, the beating heart of contemporary Manila.
Here, wherever you turn, is another opportunity for excitement and inspiration.

Shangri-La at the Fort, Manila is the city's premier location for dining, events and exceptional hospitality – as well as being home to the comprehensive Kerry Sports Center.

Experience the best of Manila in the heart of Bonifacio Global City.

Opening offers from Php 9,800.



Shangri-La at the Fort

MANILA

LONDON | ISTANBUL | SINGAPORE | HONG KONG | BEIJING | Over 90 hotels and resorts to be discovered at Shangri-La.com
30th Street corner 5th Avenue, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig 1634, Metro Manila, Philippines. Telephone: (63 2) 820 0888

A WEEK BEFORE THE SHORTEST DAY OF THE YEAR, THE SUN WAS

setting at its southernmost point in Vancouver but, just as it did, it peeked out from behind a bank of winter clouds. In a nifty surprise from Mother Nature, the sky erupted in a solstice light that stopped people in the street. It was one of those unexpected moments we all secretly want to experience when we travel, that instance we know we will never forget even if we neglect to snap it on our mobile phone.

This month is full of such surprises. We start with indulgent spa treatments, and our look at them, “Spas of the Future” (page 56), reveals a number of fascinating therapies we would have to make up if they didn’t exist—like being scrubbed with golden silk threads and then bathed in champagne. And, yes, there are treatments for couples included in the mix.

Writer Joe Cummings certainly could have used a stint in any one of these spas after his pilgrimage—calling it a “trek” or “journey” simply would not

do his tale justice—around Mount Kailash (“Ascension,” page 72). Anyone I’ve ever spoken to who has completed the circumnavigation of this sacred Tibetan mountain has told me it was a life-altering experience. Reading Joe’s account not only reaffirms this but will have you digging out your hiking boots. Exactly the kind of journey that stays with you long after you’ve returned home.

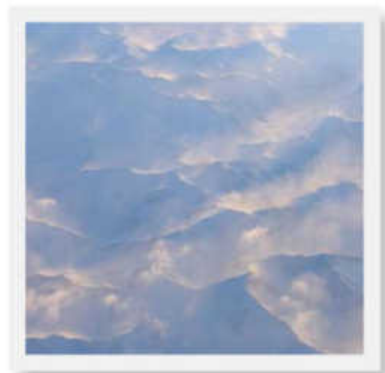


A stylized, handwritten signature of Joe Cummings in black ink.



@CKucway

chrisk@mediatransasia.com



From My Travels

I'm the person you don't want to sit beside on a long-haul flight. The guy who periodically checks the video map then opens the window shade, interrupting the dark cabin with searing daylight, for a visual scan from 10,000 meters. I'm a kid that way—but my fidgeting pays off with photos of remote corners of the globe I've never set foot in. As for the far reaches of northeastern Siberia, pictured above, I'll get there one day.

FROM LEFT: THANAKORN CHOMNAWANG; CHRISTOPHER KUOWAY



W RETREAT & SPA BALI-SEMINYAK PRESENTS

WED YOUR WAY

**THE ULTIMATE W
WEDDING EXPERIENCE**

FOR RESERVATIONS

W RETREAT & SPA BALI - SEMINYAK

JL. PETITENGET, SEMINYAK

KEROBOKAN, DENPASAR, BALI

+62 361 4738 106

wbali.events@whotels.com

#WEDYOURWAY

WBALI WEDDING.COM

W
BALI
SEMINYAK
RETREAT & SPA



INDONESIA Leading Theme Park 2015/2016



HAVE A WONDROARRR-FUL DAY!



INDONESIA Leading Tourism Show 2015/2016



BALI AGUNG
The Legend of Bali's Gods



BALI SAFARI & MARINE PARK

Jl. By Pass Prof. Dr. Ida Bagus Mantra, Km. 19,8
Gianyar, Bali 80551 - Indonesia
www.balisafarimarinepark.com

Roam! with us:

 Bali Safari and Marine Park
  @BaliSafari
  BaliSafari
  Bali Safari Marine Park



the conversation

On our watch

TripAdvisor has just released its annual *TripBarometer* study, a forecast of the coming year's travel trends derived from 44,000 survey respondents worldwide. Data is broken down by region, and here's what **Asian travelers** are thinking:

1:3

Proportion who say they'll spend more money on trips in 2016

52%

Of those who will spend more money, the proportion who said the reason was that they deserve it

42%

Percentage of travelers who visit a destination to get to know its people and culture

1/4

The number of people who choose to visit a destination simply because they found a cheap flight to get there

67%

Proportion who would not book a hotel room without air conditioning, the No. 1 dealbreaker

#TLASIA

THIS FEBRUARY, OUR READERS REVEL IN THE ROMANTIC SIDES OF ASIA.



Vows, in traditional Vietnamese style.
By @lonypamito



Aphrodisiacs aplenty in Melbourne.
By @theurbaniste



Siem Reap's song of fire and spice.
By @afterglovedk



A peck on the cheek atop Victoria Peak.
By @tatiana__s

SHARE AN INSTAGRAM PHOTO BY USING THE #TLASIA HASHTAG, AND IT MAY BE FEATURED IN AN UPCOMING ISSUE. FOLLOW @TRAVELANDLEISUREASIA

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

SOUTHEAST ASIA

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

ART DIRECTOR
DEPUTY EDITOR
SENIOR EDITOR
ASSISTANT EDITOR
SENIOR DESIGNER
DESIGNER

Christopher Kucway
Wannapha Nawayon
Jeninne Lee-St. John
Merritt Gurley
Monsicha Hoonsuwan
Chotika Sopitarchasak
Autchara Panphai

REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS / PHOTOGRAPHERS

Cedric Arnold, Jeff Chu, Helen Dalley, Philipp Engelhorn, Duncan Forgan, Diana Hubbell,
Lauryn Ishak, Mark Lean, Melanie Lee, Brent T. Madison, Ian Lloyd Neubauer,
Morgan Ommer, Aaron Joel Santos, Adam Skolnick, Darren Soh, Stephanie Zubiri

CHAIRMAN

PRESIDENT
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR

J.S. Uberoi
Egasith Chotpakditrakul
Rasina Uberoi-Bajaj

PUBLISHER

DIGITAL MEDIA MANAGER
TRAFFIC MANAGER/DEPUTY DIGITAL MEDIA MANAGER
SALES DIRECTOR
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGERS

Robert Fernhout
Pichayanee Kitsanayothin
Varin Kongmeng
Joey Kukiella
Domenica Agostino
Justin Williams
Gaurav Kumar
Kanda Thanakornwongskul
Natchanan Kaewsasaeen
Porames Sirivejabandhu
Yupadee Saebea

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
PRODUCTION MANAGER
PRODUCTION
GROUP CIRCULATION MANAGER
CIRCULATION ASSISTANT

TRAVEL + LEISURE (USA)

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT / PUBLISHING DIRECTOR
VICE PRESIDENT / PUBLISHER

Nathan Lump
Steven DeLuca
Jay Meyer

TIME INC. INTERNATIONAL LICENSING & DEVELOPMENT

(syndication@timeinc.com)

VICE PRESIDENT
EXECUTIVE EDITOR / INTERNATIONAL
SENIOR DIRECTOR, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
SENIOR DIRECTOR, AD SALES & MARKETING

Jim Jacovides
Mark Orwoll
Jennifer Savage
Joelle Quinn

TIME INC.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

Joseph Ripp
Norman Pearlstine

TRAVEL+LEISURE SOUTHEAST ASIA

VOL. 10, ISSUE 2

Travel + Leisure Southeast Asia is published monthly by Media Transasia Limited, 1603, 16/F, Island Place Tower, 510 King's Road, North Point, Hong Kong. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage or retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the Publisher. Produced and distributed by Media Transasia Thailand Ltd., 14th Floor, Ocean Tower II, 75/8 Soi Sukhumvit 19, Sukhumvit Road, Klongtoey, Wattana, Bangkok 10110, Thailand. Tel: +66 2 204-2370. Printed by Comform Co., Ltd. (+66 2 368-2942-7). Color separation by Classic Scan Co., Ltd. (+66 2 291-7575). While the editors do their utmost to verify information published, they do not accept responsibility for its absolute accuracy.

This edition is published by permission of

TIME INC. AFFLUENT MEDIA GROUP

1271 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

Tel. +1 212 522-1212 Online: www.timeinc.com

Reproduction in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner is prohibited.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Enquiries: www.travelandleisuresea.com/subscribe

ADVERTISING OFFICES

General enquiries: advertising@mediatransasia.com Singapore: 65/9029 0749; joey@mediatransasia.com

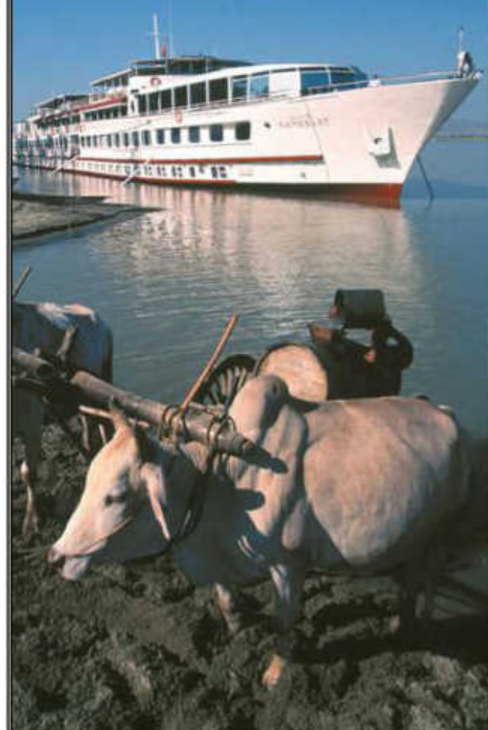
Japan: Shinano Co., Ltd. 81-3/3584-6420; kazuji@bunkoh.com

Korea: YJP & Valued Media Co., Ltd. 82-2/3789-6888; hi@yjpv.com

BELMOND ROAD TO MANDALAY, MYANMAR

DISCOVER MYANMAR

FROM MYANMAR'S GREAT CITIES TO
RIVERBANKS WHERE OXEN COME
TO DRINK, THIS LUXURIOUS CRUISER
GLIDES THROUGH BREATHTAKING
LANDSCAPES UNTOUCHED BY TIME.



CONTACT OUR LUXURY TRAVEL
CONSULTANTS ON +65 6395 0678 OR
YOUR LOCAL TRAVEL AGENT.


BELMOND
ROAD TO MANDALAY
MYANMAR

HOTELS | TRAINS | RIVER CRUISES | JOURNEYS | BELMOND.COM

T+L WORLD'S BEST AWARDS 2016

VOTE FOR YOUR TRAVEL FAVORITES

TLWorldsBest.com/intl

VOTE NOW!

For your favorite **hotels, spas, airlines, cruise lines, travel companies** and **destinations** you love—in the only truly global travel survey that matters!

Dear *Travel + Leisure* Southeast Asia readers,

We trust you. We trust your judgement. That's why we want you to rate our global travel experiences for us, in the *Travel + Leisure* World's Best Awards, now through February 29, 2016. These awards are recognized as travel's highest honor, so it's time to give back to those hotels, resorts, spas, airlines, cruise lines, travel companies and destinations you love the most. Readers of all global editions of *Travel + Leisure* will participate in the awards, so this is your chance for Southeast Asia's voice to be heard.

So visit **TLWorldsBest.com/intl** and tell us exactly what you think. The full global results will be published in our August issue.

The lobby at the South Beach, a tribute to Singapore's diverse heritage.

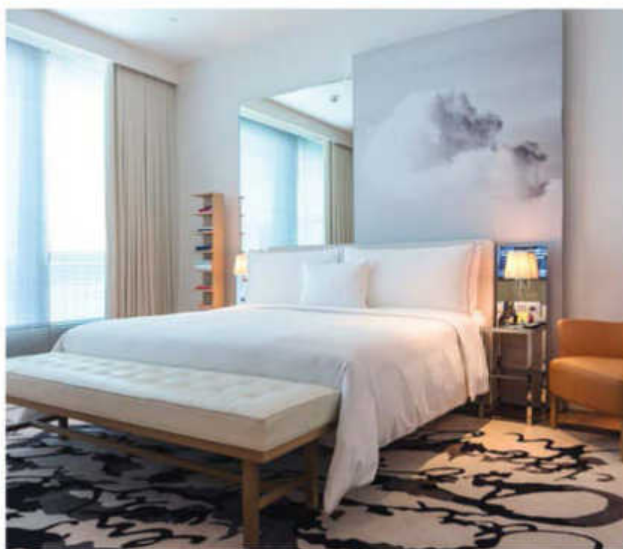
NEWS + TRENDS + DISCOVERIES

Singapore's New Style

The Lion City is roaring with an influx of intriguing hotels—each with a big-name designer, fantastic food and memorable art. BY MARIA SHOLLENBARGER

It used to be that there were two places you'd stay in Singapore, both beautiful but representing earlier eras: the old-school Raffles, with its grand lobby and burnished teak floors, and the slick Fullerton Bay Hotel, a favorite of socialites and financiers. But this year, the city is suddenly very busy with hotel openings and renovations (including, it's rumored, an overhaul of the Raffles itself). Three in particular—a colorful Philippe Starck gem, the no-expense-spared Patina, and the intimate Club Hotel—are on our radar. >>

PHOTOGRAPHER: PORNSAK NA NAKORN; PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANT: EAKAPOL PAROON; STYLIST: SARANYA ARIYAKUL; HAIR AND MAKEUP: BANDIT BOONMEE; MODEL: VIRAHYA PATTARACHOKCHAI; DRESS: CHAI GOLD LABEL; EARRINGS: PORSHZ



THE SOUTH BEACH

Clocking in at 654 rooms across several floors of a Foster & Partners–designed tower and an adjacent low-rise, The South Beach is full of bright colors, eye-catching designs and energetic service. Philippe Starck is behind the interiors, including public spaces that combine Peranakan Chinese, Indian, Moorish, American and European décor references, and guest rooms with marble, glove-soft leather upholstery, and oak finishes. The place to be is one of the two rooftop terraces, each with an infinity

pool and views of the Central Business District. Downstairs, the dining scene includes savory small plates at Laugh, and an East-meets-West menu at the oddly named ADHD (short for, in this case, All Day Hotel Dining), where the chefs turn out faultless Caesar salads, prawn lollipops, and elevated hawker-style street food. thesouthbeach.com.sg; doubles from S\$340.

THE PATINA, CAPITOL SINGAPORE

The centerpiece of the Capitol Singapore development on

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The Chairman suite at The South Beach; Laugh restaurant at The South Beach; the bar at The Disgruntled Chef, one of four restaurants at The Club Hotel.



Stamford Road is the ultra-luxe Patina. Opening this spring, the 157 rooms and suites comprise two structures (a 1909 Venetian Renaissance building and a Neoclassical building from 1930) with original features like mullioned windows and high ceilings. Famed designer Jaya Ibrahim, who passed away last year, layered the interiors in rich herringbone and latticework patterns. Paintings and porcelain selected by the Patina's owners, the Kwee family (noted Singaporean developers and collectors), fill the suites. Eru, the sprawling restaurant downstairs run by Lima-based chef Pedro Miguel Schiaffino, serves ceviche, *tiraditos* and other Peruvian specialties. And Pure & Co., the hybrid sweetshop and

bookstore next door, sells Peruvian chocolates and other gifts. patinahotels.com; doubles from S\$888.

THE CLUB HOTEL

You can't get more centrally located than The Club, a colonial stalwart in Ann Siang Hill recently reopened after a chic upgrade by Singapore-based Australian designers Matthew Shang and Paul Semple. The 18 rooms and two suites have Midcentury-inspired beds upholstered in nubby tweeds and brass lighting. The bathrooms feature quirky portraits and Bamford soaps and lotions. And the view of the skyline towering above old Hokkien shop-houses from Tiger's Milk, the rooftop pisco bar, is pure Singapore. theclub.com.sg; doubles from S\$280. +

PERFECT ESCAPES... CREATED FOR YOU

The diverse collection of brands from Central Hospitality International offers a choice of hotels and resorts in all of Asia's best destinations. From sophisticated city hotels in Bangkok offering amazing restaurants and rooftop bars, to luxurious beachfront resorts in the Maldives, Vietnam, Bali and Sri Lanka - whether you're looking to party, relax on the beach or experience a little culture, we've got you covered. With sumptuous dining, award-winning spas and a thousand ways to discover city or sea, your most difficult decision is just which rooftop vistas or cocktails to choose, or which island or beach to discover.

THAILAND • BALI • MALDIVES • SRI LANKA • VIETNAM

BOOK DIRECT FOR OUR BEST PRICE PROMISE

centralhospitality.com

E: reservations@centralhospitality.com

T: + 66 (0) 2101 1234 # 1



NOTICED

Stairs for Stares

STREET ART IN HONG KONG is really going places—specifically, to the next floor. The multivenue creative hub PMQ, which was the district's Police Married Quarters in its former life, launched an urban art project called “Hong Kong on Steps” just last month. Seven groups of artists from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and France teamed up to paint 25 flights of

stairs across PMQ, with each tiered mural meant to represent part of the city's complex landscape and cultural history. Victor Tsang, PMQ's executive director, says the display will surprise visitors by “transforming monotonic boring stairs into canvases for public art.” So the next time you visit PMQ, enjoy the artistic inclination. pmq.org.hk.



MIRACLE WORKER

The newest addition to Elizabeth Arden's beloved Eight Hour Cream line, the **All-Over Miracle Oil** (elizabetharden.com; US\$28), is even more of a multitasker than the original cream from 1930. It can be misted onto the face for a light—not oily—glow, massaged into skin as a facial and body moisturizer, and even smoothed onto hair for extra shine. It's packed with ingredients like grape-seed oil and ginger-root extract, which improve skin tone and texture. Most crucially for travelers, it's in an airplane-friendly 100-milliliter spray bottle.

FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF PMQ; COURTESY OF ELIZABETH ARDEN



Vatos co-founder Sid Kim.



Mexican-fusion snacks at Vatos.

DEBUT

Singapore's New Vatos

From Seoul to Singapore, by way of Los Angeles, this new fusion favorite is the missing link between carnitas and kimchi.

THE BRAINCHILD OF THREE Korean-American guys, **Vatos Urban Tacos** blends Californian Mexican, Tex-Mex and Korean cuisine into inventive dishes like kimchi carnitas fries, *galbi* tacos and spicy chicken quesadillas. The project began with a Kickstarter campaign in 2011 and since then the restaurant has blossomed across Korea with six locations, and now is expanding globally with an outlet in Singapore that opened at the end of last year. Sid Kim and Kenny Park were raised in southern California, while Juweon Jonathan Kim comes from Texas. With such provenance,

the founders all consider themselves experts in Mexican flavor, but their moms grew up in Korea, so the meals cooked at home were more focused on bulgogi than burritos. After-school snacks were usually Korean leftovers tossed into a taco shell or tortilla. Ko-Mex has proved a successful recipe for Vatos, which means “men” in Spanish—and as the hybrid fare has drawn famous names from U.S. secretary of state John Kerry to top model Tyra Banks, perhaps one winningly odd pairing begets another. *South Beach Quarter, 36 Beach Rd., Singapore; vataskorea.com; dinner for two S\$50.*

CRUISING

Sea Legs and Dancing Shoes

Salsa your way from Singapore to Malaysia onboard Royal Caribbean's first dance camp.

Why settle for walking on water when you can cha-cha-cha across the ocean? At the end of the month, Royal Caribbean's 15-deck *Mariner of the Seas* will launch the cruise line's first-ever dance camp at sea on a four-night journey from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi. Guests can take classes in ballroom and Latin dancing, Bachatango and Rock 'n' Roll, and learn from world-renowned coaches like *Burn The Floor*'s Luka Fanni from Italy; Peter Townsend and Belman Salihovic from Australia; Sunny Low, Derrick Torre and Feliz Ferlino from Singapore; and Uapan Snidvongs from Thailand. There will also be performances by professional champions, including Russia's own Mikhail Ereemeev and Olesya Ereemeeva. Watch them sail across the dance floor while you glide through the high seas. *royalcaribbean.com; February 29-March 4 cruise from S\$914 per person for a shared junior suite.*



FROM ABOVE: Dance pros Mikhail Ereemeev and Olesya Ereemeeva; *Mariner of the Seas*.

TECH

POCKET TRAINERS

These mobile fitness apps will help you work up a sweat wherever you are.

GROKKER

This fitness video-on-demand service has 20-minute ab classes and seven-minute cardio workouts (all from certified instructors) that you can squeeze in before hitting the buffet. Try five videos for free, or get unlimited access for US\$14.99 a month.

PASSPORT ASIA

This popular gym-booking app launched out of Singapore last year and is now expanding to South Korea, Indonesia, Hong Kong, China, Malaysia and Australia. The app is free but the service is subscription-based: S\$59 for a basic plan including four classes per month at any of the 300 plus gyms in their network, or S\$99 for an unlimited pass.

AIRFIT

AirFit hopes to popularize post-security airport gyms, starting with a May opening in JFK's Terminal 4 (20 more across the globe are in the works). Use the app to locate the gyms and to pay for entry (US\$25 a day or US\$100 per month) and clothing rental.

— NIKKI EKSTEIN



INTRODUCING

Hong Kong Bling

Jeweler Dickson Yewn's contemporary Chinese baubles are popping up everywhere from fine art exhibitions to royal dinners. BY GRACE MA

MANY JEWELRY designers aspire to create wearable art, but Dickson Yewn's latest collection is *actually* being displayed as an installation at **Nunu Fine Art** (nunufineart.com) in Taipei this May. This isn't the first time his work has been in the spotlight; one of his striking jadeite rings made headlines after Michelle Obama wore it to a dinner hosted by President Obama for Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip in 2011. The exquisite Wish Fulfilling ring, reminiscent of latticed windows commonly found in ancient Chinese homes, marked the first time a contemporary Chinese jewelry brand was chosen by the American first lady, and

thrust the Hong Kong-born designer and his eponymous label **Yewn** (yewn.com; pieces from US\$1,200) onto the international stage.

It was about time. Yewn had been quietly producing gorgeous bling imbued with Chinese history since 1995. Before that, Yewn dabbled in advertising and film but decided that having to contend with "a lot of communication and politics to get things done" was not for him. "I was an introvert," Yewn says, "so I withdrew to more personal forms of expression where I didn't need to work with others." Jewelry design fit bill and he got his associates degree from New York's Fashion Institute

of Technology, where he tried his hand at miniature sculptures. Once he got the hang of intricate design, he progressed to fine jewelry collections—now numbering 19—which are sold at his two boutiques at Lane Crawford and The Peninsula Hong Kong, and internationally in department stores from Bergdorf Goodman in New York to Harrods in London. His collections, with ornate names like Floral Lattice, Imperial Grace and Zi Ran, build on his Chinese heritage

signature, including his partiality for gold. "Gold is a very old and important material in traditional Chinese jewelry, especially for the royal family," Yewn says. "It symbolizes wealth and privilege." While he's a fan of gilt sheen, he also experiments with different materials and his upcoming collection Imperial Porcelain, which launches later this year, will branch out into the blue-and-white motifs of fine China.

Yewn celebrated the brand's 15th anniversary last year by starting another label, Dickson Yewn. He spent five years perfecting the natural hues of 60 butterfly species to launch the label's first collection, Dream and Reality, consisting of brooches made mainly of precious woods like rosewood and *zitan*, which will be exhibited at Nunu gallery this summer. Each species design is available in only eight limited-edition pieces. The entire collection echoes a famous Taoist story of a man who dreamt he transformed into a butterfly and began to wonder if he was a man dreaming that he was the insect or if perhaps it was the other way around.

These glittering embodiments of local folklore add an auspicious dash of Chinese culture, history and elegance to any fashion maven's outfit, not to mention give your style new wings. 🦋



An intricate jade ring from Yewn's Floral Lattice collection.

COURTESY OF DICKSON YEWN



**WORLD'S BEST
LOW-COST AIRLINE**
7 YEARS RUNNING

COME AWAY WITH US!

Indonesia . Thailand . Philippines . Korea
Whatever it is you want to do, or wherever
it is you want to go.

We'll take you there



#flywithairasia



AirAsia

Lowest fares @ airasia.com

AirAsia

DINING

Seoul's Salad Days

Karryn Miller takes a crisp bite out of the Korean capital's leafier side, now ripe with vegetarian fare.



Harvest salad with roasted squash at Plant.

COURTESY OF PLANT

IT IS HARD TO THINK ABOUT Korean cuisine without picturing heaping piles of raw meat primed for the barbecue. There is prevailing attitude in Seoul that meat-free diets are for the pious or poor, which long has resulted in a dearth of vegetarian-friendly dining options. The last few years, however, have seen a surging public interest in healthier eating, combined with an effort to promote traditional Korean temple cuisine—which is prepared without meat, fish, MSG, garlic, onion or leek—to foreign visitors, and an influx of entrepreneurial cooks from overseas. All of this has fomented a vegetarian awakening in Seoul, exemplified by the five outposts below.

PLANT Dishing up creative vegan cuisine in a cozy setting in the backstreets of bustling Itaewon, Plant feels as if you're sitting in owner Mipa's home as she cooks melt-in-your-mouth dairy-free desserts like mocha-espresso layer cake, as well as a rotating lineup of lunch options ranging from healthy but filling salads to meat-free comfort foods. The funky café was born out of her home business—an online vegan bakeshop—but, luckily for us, as the demand grew so did the need for a storefront. 63-15 Itaewon-dong, Yongsan-gu; 82-70/4115-8388; plantcafeseoul.com; lunch and drinks for two W30,000.

SANCHON Sanchon is one of the many temple-cuisine restaurants in Insadong, but it is hidden away off the main tourist drag. Founded by a monk in the 1980s, it is a mainstay for visiting vegans seeking traditional Korean cuisine minus the ubiquitous meat and seafood. The hearty multicourse set menu includes veggie versions of well-known dishes like *jeon* (a Korean savory pancake) and fish-free kimchi, while also highlighting lesser-known local vegetables and mountain herbs. 30-13 Kwanhun-dong, Jongno-gu; 82-2/735-0312; sanchon.com; lunch set menu for two W66,000.

INSARANG Opened late last year, Insarang is a vibrant new addition to Insadong's dining scene. The café offers totally vegetarian traditional Korean monastic dishes in a more modern setting than its nearby counterparts. The airy second-floor space is also ideal for people-watching as it looks over one of Seoul's most popular (mainly) pedestrian streets. Try the lotus-leaf rice

set paired with chrysanthemum tea. 2F, 24 Insadong-gil, Jongno-gu; 82-70/4162-2533; gpinsarang.blog.me; lunch and drinks for two W40,000.

CAFE SLOBBIE While not 100 percent vegetarian, the curiously named Slobbie is veggie-friendly, and options include letter-of-the-law Buddhist cuisine, with no onions or garlic. The hip café in the university district of Hongdae embraces the slow-food movement, sourcing produce from local farmers. The Korean set meals are best washed down with a flavored *makgeolli*, a milky sweet fermented rice wine, from the café's impressive selection. 163-9 Donggyo-dong, Mapo-gu; 82-2/3143-5525; blog.naver.com/slobbie8; lunch and drinks for two W25,000.

COOK AND BOOK Another vegan option in one of Seoul's happening student enclaves, this eatery has opted for a casual approach with both food and ambiance. The eclectic retro seating calls for guests to linger with a book from the café's shelves, while enjoying an open-faced veggie burger or vegan treats like a double-layer Oreo cake. 361-26 Hapjeong-dong, Mapo-gu; 82-2/325-1028; blog.naver.com/cookandbook; coffee and cake for two W20,000. ☺



Honey-ginger tea at Insarang.



Temple food in bloom.



Seasonal bibimbap at Insarang.



BALI SAFARI & MARINE PARK

Jl. By Pass Prof. Dr. Ida Bagus Mantra, Km. 19,8
Gianyar, Bali 80551 - Indonesia
www.balisafarimarinepark.com

Roam! with us :

Bali Safari and Marine Park
 @BaliSafari
 BaliSafari
 Bali Safari Marine Park

/ **here&now** /



MUST-HAVE

Flying High

Chanel presented its travel-themed spring collection in a fantasy air terminal built inside Paris's Grand Palais. It was a spectacular backdrop for the brand's nod to the glamour of travel: double-C-emblazoned suitcases; Boeing-shaped brooches; and tweed handbags with retro, airline-inspired badges. For stylish frequent flyers, it's a look to book now.

— JANE HERMAN BISHOP

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Chanel brooches, from US\$500; tweed bag, US\$4,500; bracelets, from US\$1,200.

ON-SCREEN

Ready for Their Close-Up

HOTELS HAVE PLAYED IMPORTANT CHARACTERS in the movies for quite some time now. Try to imagine Sofia Coppola's *Somewhere* without the pool at the Chateau Marmont, or Garry Marshall's *Pretty Woman* without the lobby of the Beverly Wilshire. This year's Oscar contenders make stellar use of some lesser-known but equally picturesque hotels—and they're ones you can actually stay at. —MICKEY RAPKIN



For *Youth*, about two old friends on vacation, director Paolo Sorrentino used **Waldhaus Flims Mountain Resort & Spa** (waldhaus-flims.ch; doubles from CHF399), a 139-year-old property in Switzerland overlooking the Rhine Valley. It has a grand ballroom befitting the lions played by Michael Caine and Harvey Keitel, plus a glass-enclosed spa—necessary for a scene in which octogenarians ogle a Miss Universe winner. "The hotel, even if it has a beautiful modern spa inside, is very consistent with the age of the characters," Sorrentino says.

In *Carol*, set in 1952, director Todd Haynes tells the story of a romantic road trip taken by two women—played by Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara—who check in to Chicago's Drake Hotel. "It's a moment of glamour and glory," says production designer Judy Becker. The only problem: filming was in Cincinnati. So Haynes chose instead to shoot where he was staying: the **Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza** (hilton.com; doubles from US\$129), a landmark built in 1931 whose Art Deco interiors and marble steps stood in quite nicely.



In *Ex Machina*, a reclusive billionaire named Nathan designs a lifelike robot in a minimalist compound, played by Norway's **Juvet Landscape Hotel** (juvet.com; doubles from NOK1,550). Production designer Mark Digby spotted the hotel, which has nine glass-walled cabins on stilts, during a helicopter ride. "The Juvet is powerful and private. Which is what Nathan is," Digby says. As for putting the spectacular hotel on full display, Digby laughingly admits he's got mixed feelings: "Maybe not everybody should know about this."

exotic & idyllic retreat

...where life is a private celebration

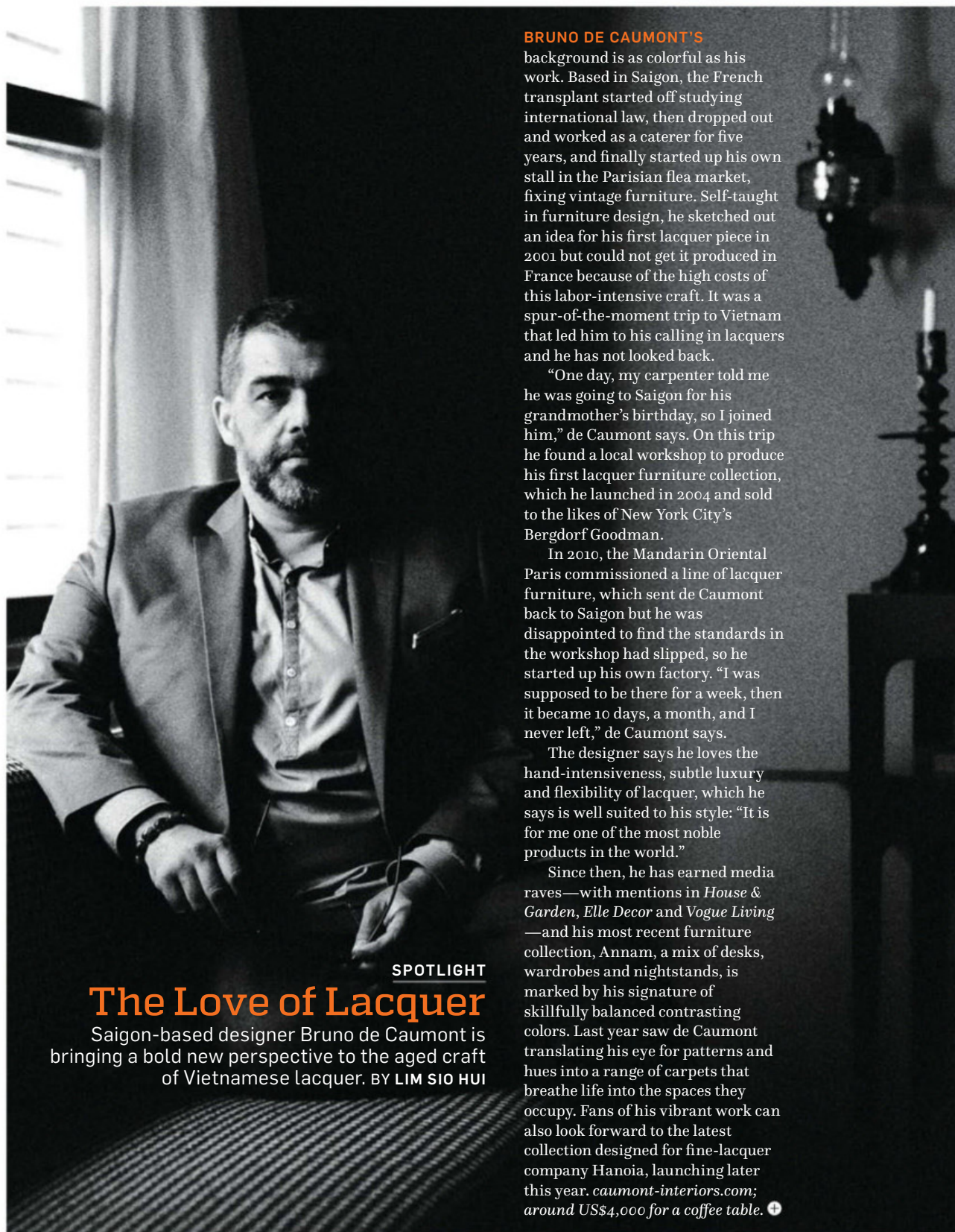


Sanur | Ubud | Nusa Dua | Jimbaran

P. 62 361 705 777 F. 62 361 705 101
E. experience@kayumanis.com

the gangsa
private villa
by KATUPHANIS
www.thegangsa.com

KAYUMANIS
www.kayumanis.com



BRUNO DE CAUMONT'S

background is as colorful as his work. Based in Saigon, the French transplant started off studying international law, then dropped out and worked as a caterer for five years, and finally started up his own stall in the Parisian flea market, fixing vintage furniture. Self-taught in furniture design, he sketched out an idea for his first lacquer piece in 2001 but could not get it produced in France because of the high costs of this labor-intensive craft. It was a spur-of-the-moment trip to Vietnam that led him to his calling in lacquers and he has not looked back.

"One day, my carpenter told me he was going to Saigon for his grandmother's birthday, so I joined him," de Caumont says. On this trip he found a local workshop to produce his first lacquer furniture collection, which he launched in 2004 and sold to the likes of New York City's Bergdorf Goodman.

In 2010, the Mandarin Oriental Paris commissioned a line of lacquer furniture, which sent de Caumont back to Saigon but he was disappointed to find the standards in the workshop had slipped, so he started up his own factory. "I was supposed to be there for a week, then it became 10 days, a month, and I never left," de Caumont says.

The designer says he loves the hand-intensiveness, subtle luxury and flexibility of lacquer, which he says is well suited to his style: "It is for me one of the most noble products in the world."

Since then, he has earned media raves—with mentions in *House & Garden*, *Elle Decor* and *Vogue Living*—and his most recent furniture collection, Annam, a mix of desks, wardrobes and nightstands, is marked by his signature of skillfully balanced contrasting colors. Last year saw de Caumont translating his eye for patterns and hues into a range of carpets that breathe life into the spaces they occupy. Fans of his vibrant work can also look forward to the latest collection designed for fine-lacquer company Hanoia, launching later this year. caumont-interiors.com; around US\$4,000 for a coffee table. +

SPOTLIGHT

The Love of Lacquer

Saigon-based designer Bruno de Caumont is bringing a bold new perspective to the aged craft of Vietnamese lacquer. BY LIM SIO HUI



Braving the vertical climb of the Manaslu Trail, Nepal.

T+L PICKS

Going the Distance

If plodding along on a treadmill feels a bit blasé, the latest fitness frenzy is sure to inspire you. **Diana Hubbell** checks out epic running trails framed by some of the region's most striking scenery.

NEPAL THE MANASLU TRAIL

This grueling path traverses 200 kilometers and a 5,100-meter mountain pass. Experienced athletes require seven days of running plus one day of hiking to complete it, though you may be tempted to stop along the way and snap photos of prayer flags, Himalayan peaks, and the wild, windswept slopes across the Tibetan border. It gives a new meaning to the phrase "runner's high." manaslutrailrace.org.

NEW ZEALAND THE MILFORD TRACK

Panoramic vistas of Fiordland National Park, an ancient tableau sculpted by glaciers, set the scene for this 54-kilometer run. It typically takes four days to complete the Mackinnon Pass, while soaking in views of the triple-tiered, 580-meter Sutherland Falls—the country's highest—but die-hards can conquer it in a day. Just make sure you secure approval from the Department of Conservation in advance. doc.govt.nz.

AUSTRALIA THE LARAPINTA TRAIL

It may be one of the newest routes in central Oz, but the 223-kilometer, 12-section Larapinta Trail has already established itself as one of the most popular places for an ambitious walkabout. The undulating rust-hued hills of the Outback give this landscape an otherworldly feel and the vast length makes it possible to jog for hours without spotting another soul. larapintatrail.com.au.

JAPAN THE KYOTO TRAIL

Want to get into the sport but nervous about taking the plunge? This 110-kilometer trail around Japan's former imperial capital offers plenty of challenge, but never takes you too far from civilization. If your stamina falters, you can always trot to one of the city's train stations and take the lazy way back, but if you can power through the whole circuit you'll pass waterfalls, bamboo forests and ancient pagodas. kyoto-trail.net.

SRI LANKA THE WILD ELEPHANT TRAIL

Leopards and bears and water buffalo, oh my! Pachyderms aren't the only megafauna you're likely to see on this 210-kilometer dash. Particularly varied terrain makes this a gorgeous, if strenuous slog. The trail culminates in a sprint up 1,860 steps to Sigiriya Rock, a UNESCO World Heritage site, that is equal parts exhilarating and excruciating. global-limits.com/the-wild-elephant-trail.html. +



Sheraton®

HUA HIN PRANBURI VILLAS



Your Perfect Combination of A Wonderful Holiday

Escape to the peace and tranquility of Sheraton Hua Hin Pranburi Villas, an exclusive destination that creates irreplaceable memories with its elegance setting and sublime service. From the very own secluded pool villa, to everything we offer, you need never leave your private sanctuary.

At Sheraton Hua Hin Pranburi Villas, the perfect retreat begins the moment you arrive.

SHERATON HUA HIN PRANBURI VILLAS

9/22 Moo 5, Paknampran, Pranburi, Prachuap Khiri Khan 77220, Thailand

T +(66)32 909 900 F +(66)32 909 909

sheraton.com/huahinpranburi facebook.com/sheratonhuahinpranburi



spg.

Starwood
Preferred
Guest

©2015 Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Preferred Guest, SPG, Sheraton and their logos are the trademarks of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc., or its affiliates. For full terms and conditions, visit sheraton.com/huahin

beyond

NEW ZEALAND | MALAYSIA | SIBERIA | + MORE

100

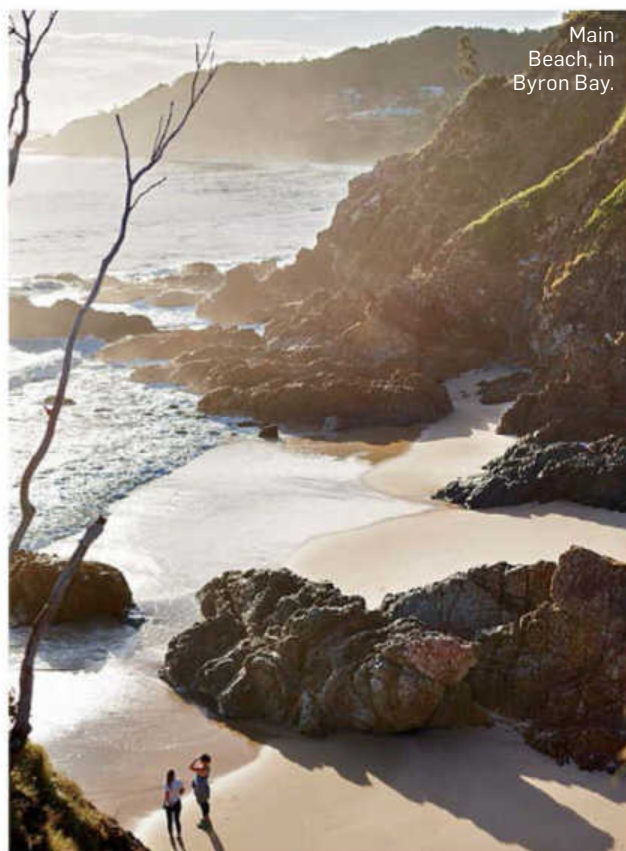
PLACE SETTINGS

Riding a Wave

Some of the best cooking in Australia is drawing a whole new group of boho explorers to the surfers' haven of Byron Bay.

Pat Nourse takes a bite. PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANSON SMART

The dining room at 100 Mile Table, a Byron Bay café known for its ham-and-cheese "jaffles."



Main
Beach, in
Byron Bay.



A salad with maple-glazed pumpkin, blood oranges and chèvre at Three Blue Ducks.

CHOCOLATE YOGA, reads the poster. “EXPLORE THE MYSTERY.” It’s selling a mix of kundalini yoga and ritualistic Mayan hot-cocoa consumption at a pop-up studio, timed to celebrate the full moon in Libra. This, more than anything, sums up Byron Bay, a small Pacific coast town at Australia’s easternmost point, 75 minutes north of Sydney by plane.

For decades, it has been a wave-riders’ magnet and a byword for Aussie counterculture. But the region’s surfer-Zen vibe is giving way to a serious culinary renaissance. Now, Byron Bay is luring those who would rather eat 10-course meals than perfect their downward dog—though at most local spots, both types are welcome.

Thanks to its varied terrain and a wealth of microclimates, Byron Bay and the hamlets that surround it—Mullumbimby, Brunswick Heads, Cabarita Beach—comprise one of Australia’s most bountiful corners. Visit any of the five greenmarkets in the area and you’ll find sustainably harvested seafood, locally made

cheeses and salumi, heirloom fruits and vegetables and freshly roasted coffee. Dozens of chefs and producers are making the pilgrimage from Sydney, Melbourne, and beyond, tempted by the promise of cleaner, greener, slower living—and staying for quality ingredients from the nearby bays and hinterlands. “There’s been a steady stream of talent moving here,” says Sarah Swan, a 15-year veteran of Neil Perry’s legendary Rockpool restaurant, in Sydney, and the co-owner of 100 Mile Table, a café and catering operation in Byron Bay that specializes in offbeat culinary events (like a Christmas dinner held in July). Here, chefs travel no more than a few

kilometers to source what they use, and in some cases they’re doing the farming themselves.

Luckily for the visiting epicurean, the area’s surf shacks and beach bungalows now have company in Halcyon House (halcyonhouse.com.au; doubles from A\$550), a stylishly renovated motel right on the ocean; its 21 rooms are individually designed with handpicked antiques and vibrantly patterned fabrics. The property also has a restaurant run by a Noma alum—further evidence of the region’s rising culinary profile.

THREE BLUE DUCKS

You’ll find the essence of Byron Bay’s new food movement at Three Blue

Ducks, a supersize spin-off of the successful restaurant of the same name in Sydney's Bronte Beach. Opened in March, it is the latest addition to an ambitious, constantly growing artisan complex called the Farm, which includes a florist, a fitness camp, a permaculture workshop, a yoga studio and a particularly good bakery. The 35-hectare property also has a free-range-chicken farm, a macadamia orchard and an Argentinean-style grill. But what chefs Mark LaBrooy and Darren Robertson are most excited about are their rainwater tanks and pumping paddocks, which form an almost closed loop for water use. At the open-air restaurant, the surf-loving chefs' brand of locavorism yields dishes like blackened green beans with spicy peppers, shallots and lemon, or creamy pâté of chicken

livers with toasted bread and local plums. threeblueducks.com; mains A\$25–\$40.

MILK & HONEY

A 15-minute drive inland, the sleepy hamlet of Mullumbimby—hometown of rapper Iggy Azalea and a small but well-established farming community—lays claim to the region's best weekly greenmarket and the finest wood-fired pizza between Sydney and Brisbane, made at buzzy trattoria Milk & Honey. Chef Timmy Brebner, an alumnus of Sydney's iconic white-tablecloth spot Tetsuya's, focuses on classic flavors with a twist. His signature pie, topped with locally made salumi and house-dried bottarga, is a salty smash. He also uses his custom oven to roast beef bones for marrow-smearred crostini and to char vegetables for hearty sides like

broccoli with tamari and almonds. milkandhoneymullumbimby.com.au; pizzas A\$20–\$24.

FOLK

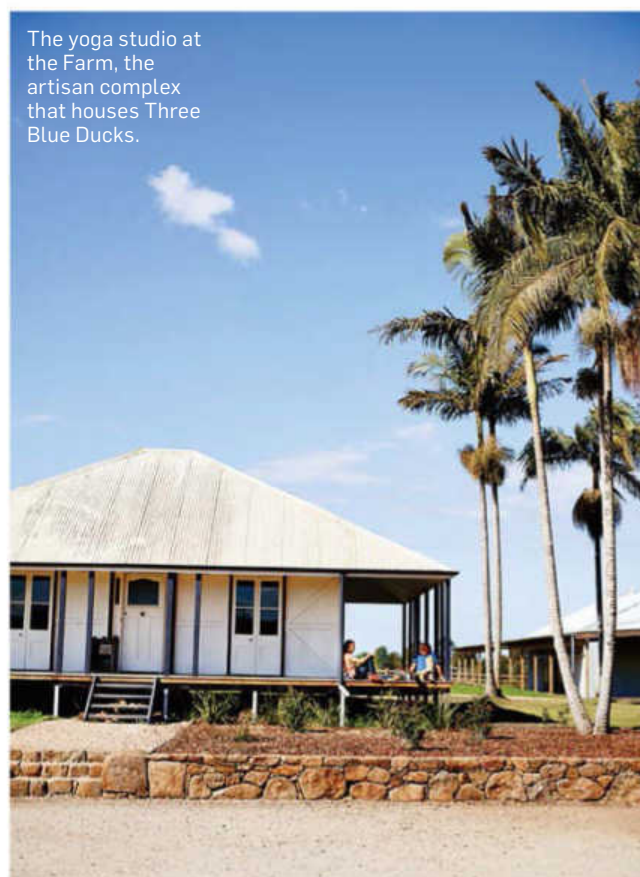
You'll know you've reached this quirky café five minutes from Byron Bay when you spot the surfer- and backpacker-filled trailer park next door. Here, in a series of old shipping containers decorated with vintage record players and salvaged wood, baristas brew single-estate organic coffee and whip up smoothies with almond milk, turmeric and cacao. Don't miss the gluten-free Australian avocado toast: it's on a corn arepa piled with grilled citrus and microgreens. *Sunrise Blvd., Byron Bay*; no phone; mains A\$10–\$18.

PAPERDAISY

The dining room of Halcyon House's sceney restaurant dazzles in a palette



Daytime dining at Paper Daisy, the restaurant at Halcyon House.



The yoga studio at the Farm, the artisan complex that houses Three Blue Ducks.



Chef Josh Lewis finishes a radish salad at Fleet, in Brunswick Heads.

of Palm Springs—meets—Bondi Beach blues and whites (ikat lampshades, chevron-striped chairs, marine-colored tomes). The glamorous crowd that gathers there nightly for hot smoked oysters and glasses of crisp Australian Riesling is just as meticulously styled. Overseeing the kitchen is celebrated chef Ben Devlin, who has created a casual yet inventive menu. He wraps the day's

catch—usually cod or dusky flathead fish—in sheets of tree bark to keep it juicy on the grill, then serves it with caramelized onions. His rendition of spanner crab, a sweet, local crustacean, is prepared with macadamia milk and lemon. If you come by day, sit outdoors and order the king-prawn sandwich—it's the height of poolside dining. *mains* A\$25–\$45.

100 MILE TABLE

The setting, an industrial-looking kitchen hidden among garages and workshops, doesn't quite fit the Byron Bay stereotype. And the best dish at this café—a toasted ham-and-cheese sandwich called a "jaffle"—seems to contradict the health-nut fixations of local residents. But the place is hopping. So what's between the bread? Glazed Farmgate ham, tender braised leeks, turmeric-yellow pickles, or a combination thereof. *100miletale.com*; sandwiches from A\$7.

FLEET

The township of Brunswick Heads (population 1,636) now has one of the most experimental restaurants in the entire country. At Fleet, a tiny space with a cool concrete bar and wood-paneled ceilings, chef Josh Lewis—a recent Melbourne transplant—is committed to spotlighting ingredients that other chefs might discard, like whey and crab shells. And the sommelier, Astrid McCormack, focuses on nontraditional winemakers and hunts for bottles that pair perfectly with the fare. Their approach isn't preachy, just delicious. An adventurous night around Fleet's 15-seat bar, for instance, could range from crisp shrimp heads with corn sauce and Yarra Valley rosé to pickled oysters with Veneto Prosecco or lamb breast with brussels sprouts, cheese-rind oil, and a glass of South Australian Mourvèdre. "We are incredibly blessed," says McCormack of their producers, who source ingredients from the nearby sea, rivers, pastures and hills. "We have access to anything and everything in its freshest form. Fish is delivered to us before it heads to the Sydney and Brisbane markets. Josh just got off the phone with our supplier—one of his guys is putting his sardine nets on the boat tonight, so with any luck we'll have a fresh catch tomorrow. What more can a chef ask for?" *fleet-restaurant.com.au*; *mains* A\$10–\$28. +

Destination: Japan

NHK WORLD



Your journey to this exciting country begins before you've even landed.
Tune in for news, tips and insights from one of these informative TV shows.



Tokyo Eye 2020

As the world's greatest city gears up for the 2020 Olympics, there are plenty of exciting changes afoot. Explore them together with popular host Chris Peppier.



Journeys in Japan

This program gives you insider tips for travelling around the country as you watch English-speaking tourists take in the sights and report back on the experience.



Dining with the Chef

Let Japanese cuisine experts show you how to prepare homemade dishes. Featured recipes remain online so you can refer back to them.



Newsroom Tokyo

Newsroom Tokyo puts the spotlight on Japan and the rest of Asia. Get all major news, the latest developments, and learn what drives them. See expert reports and analysis.

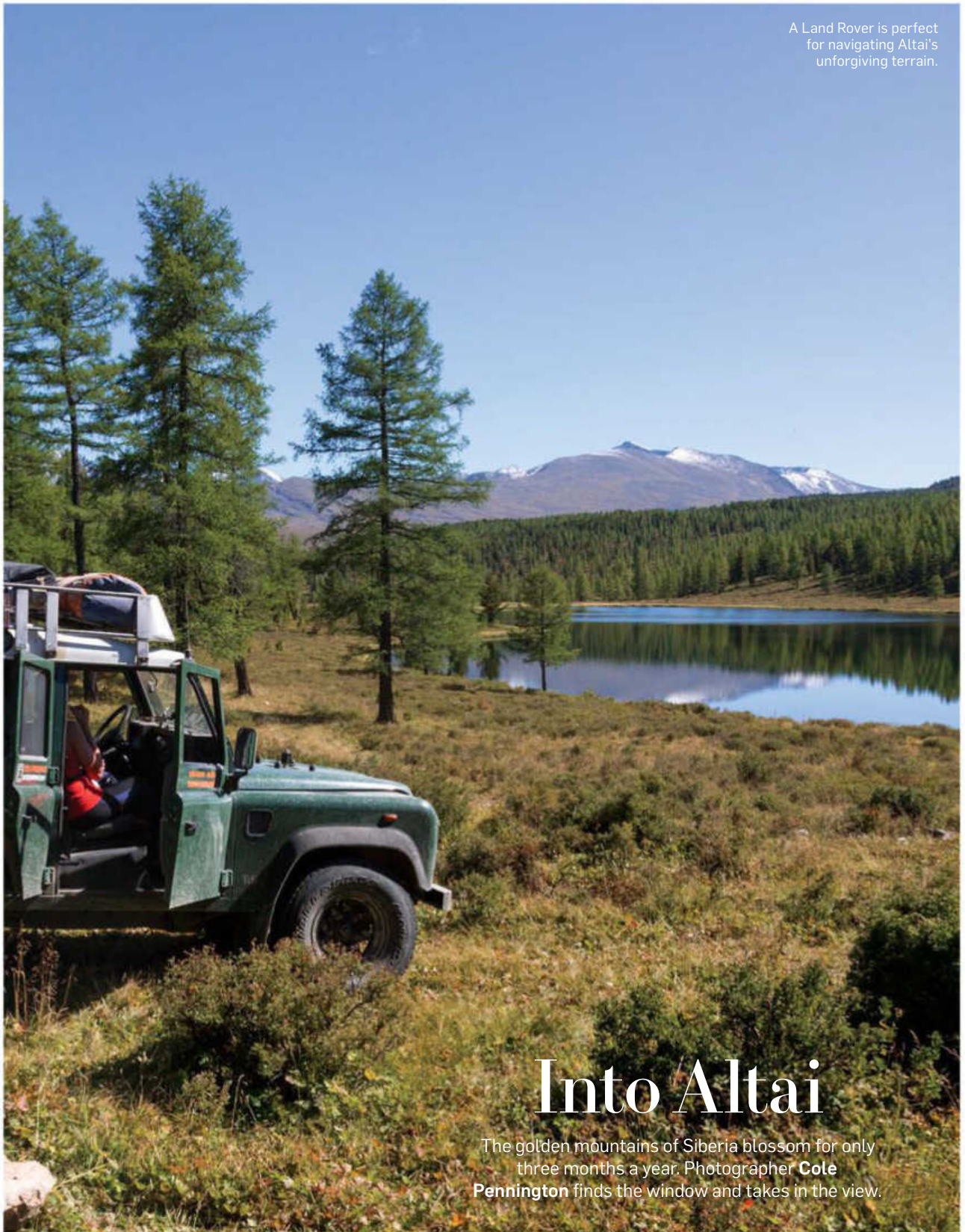
NHK World now has a free Video on Demand (VOD) service, which allows you to watch certain programmes at a time that suits you.

Live streaming available
via our free apps for
iPhone®, iPad® and Android™.



This high-definition, English-language channel delivers news and lifestyle programmes 24 hours a day. Focusing on themes from a Japanese viewpoint, NHK WORLD TV is available via cable, satellite, mobile and live streaming. To watch, visit nhk.jp/nhkworld

A Land Rover is perfect
for navigating Altai's
unforgiving terrain.



Into Altai

The golden mountains of Siberia blossom for only three months a year. Photographer **Cole Pennington** finds the window and takes in the view.



Caviar is plentiful in Siberia and you can buy the canned variety as a souvenir.



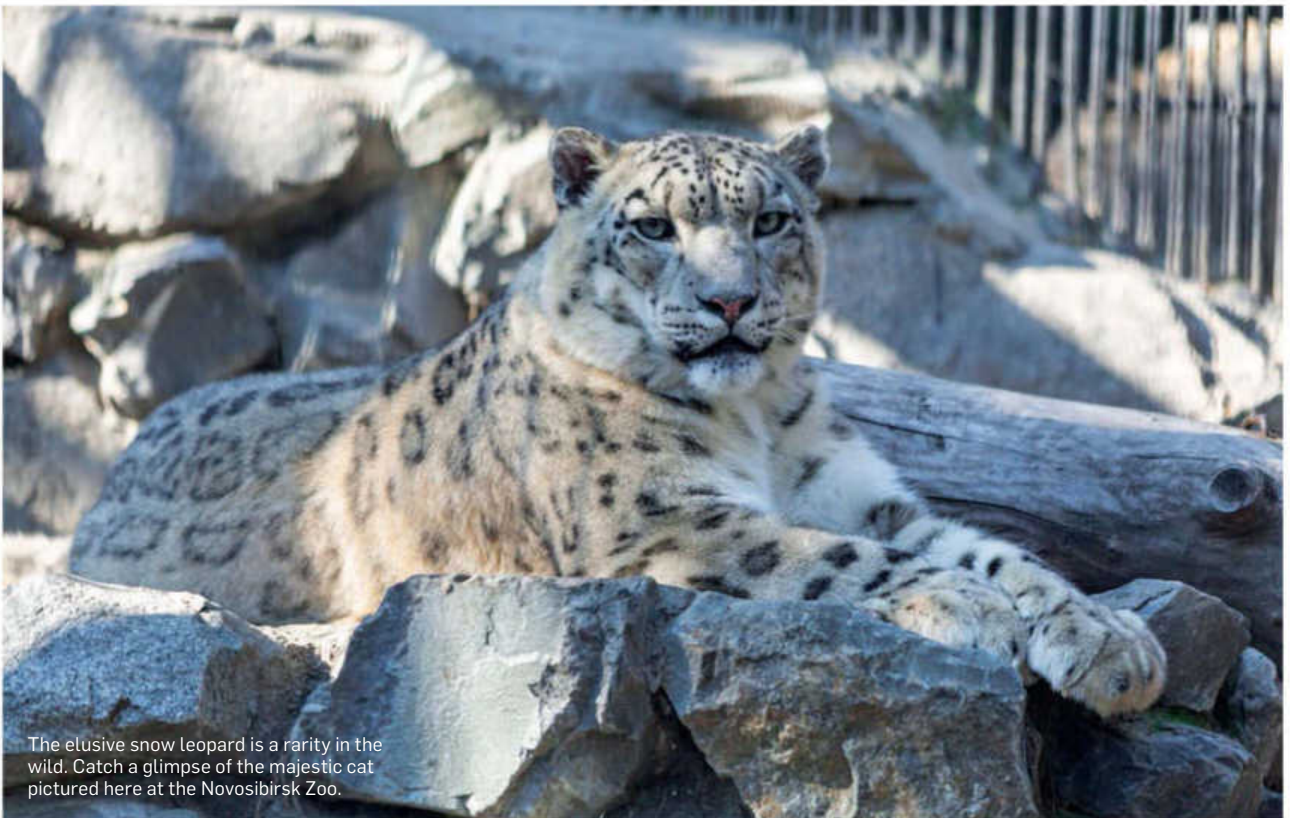
Traditional medicines contain coveted elixirs such as velvet reindeer antlers, cut up and steeped in a local spirit, said to boost virility.

SIBERIA ISN'T ALWAYS a rolling blanket of white. For a fleeting three months a year, the Altai region of central Siberia shakes off the snow and sprouts a kaleidoscope of wild flowers and greenery. The melt reveals roads that aren't on any map, and even in the halcyon days of summer these dirt trails will chew up and spit out the average car. In the Altai Mountains, the UAZ-469, or "Russian Jeep" reigns supreme, but our driver told us that when you fix one thing, two things break. So we opted for a Land Rover Defender, a capable off-road vehicle with military roots.

I piggybacked on a British expedition to the Scythian Tombs, where Pazyryk mummies from the third century BC were unearthed eight years ago. Japanese, Turks and Native Americans all claim this area as their land of origin. Local Altai—historically nomadic people who are an aesthetic blend of European and Mongolian—believe they are the descendants of the Pazyryk culture, while the Turks insist the Pazyryks migrated west into Turkey. Turkish visitors place flags around the area to reiterate to Russians that this land was once theirs. Our guides removed each fluttering little political statement. Not on their watch.

Luckily, ancient politics took a back-burner on our nights spent camped out in the Aktry valley, eating Russian dumplings stuffed with reindeer meat and taking shots of vodka with local Maroshka berry juice. The vodka had extra heat, the berries a bit more sweetness, the view a dash more luster, for knowing the season was close to its end. Soon the snow would start to fall, and Altai would disappear into the flurry.

In Mongolian, *altai* means "the golden mountain." The UNESCO World Heritage range sits at the crossroads of Russia, China, Mongolia and Kazakhstan.

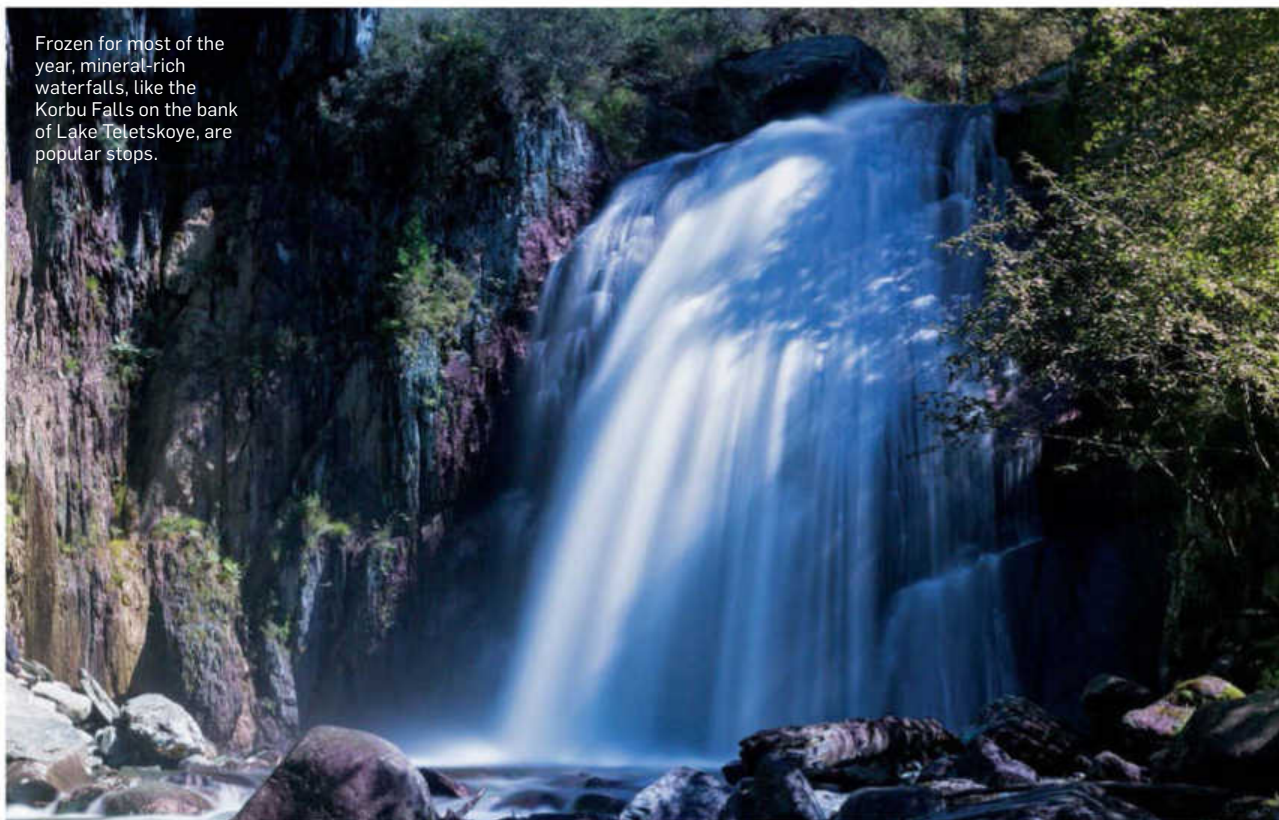


The elusive snow leopard is a rarity in the wild. Catch a glimpse of the majestic cat pictured here at the Novosibirsk Zoo.

Routes through the mountains and steppes are carved out every summer by off-road vehicles, so local knowledge is required to navigate these temporary trails.



Frozen for most of the year, mineral-rich waterfalls, like the Korbu Falls on the bank of Lake Teletskoye, are popular stops.





Grapes and Gatsby

Karryn Miller explores Napier, the birthplace of New Zealand winemaking and a hub of Art Deco architecture.

NAPIER'S HISTORY ENDS AND BEGINS AGAIN on February 3, 1931. On that date a fierce earthquake leveled the town on the eastern edge of New Zealand's North Island, and even altered its coastline. The community was forced to build the city anew, and trendy Art Deco turned out to be the perfect style to adorn the low and sturdy buildings required by the new quake proofing standards. So, out of the rubble emerged a stunning concentration of the 1920s-born, geometric, folk art- and avant garde-influenced new modernist aesthetic. Most of it still stands today, frozen in time for 85 years. The annual **Tremains Art Deco Festival**, set for February 17 to 21 this year, is a throwback celebration of the style that defines Napier.

COURTESY OF ART DECO TRUST NAPIER

FROM LEFT: Masonic Hotel's Royal suite; a parade of vintage cars at the Art Deco Festival; *A Wave in Time*, a statue of Sheila Williams, the daughter of Napier's most famous architect. OPPOSITE: Make your grand entrance through the New Napier Arch.



This month the city and surrounding region will play host to 250 events over five austral summer days, from a “Gatsby Picnic,” to a “Prohibition Party” with moonshine and casino tables, to a procession of vintage automobiles passing the Art Deco facades of Napier’s main thoroughfares. And though much of the draw is the history, hotels are getting total renovations, new restaurants are opening up and there are brand-new sites to see—evidence that city, while reverent of its past, is looking towards the future. Here, our guide to experiencing Napier in all its Art Deco glory.

STAY

+ The Art Deco **Masonic Hotel** (Corner Tennyson Street and Marine Parade; 64-6/835-8689; masonic.co.nz; doubles from NZ\$219), the place to stay during the festival, completed a total refurbishment of its 42 eclectic rooms. The Royal suite has the best view of Marine Parade and the festivities. You can even make like Queen Elizabeth II, who stayed in the room during her Coronation Tour, and wave to onlookers from your coveted perch.

DO

+ The city’s **Art Deco Trust** (artdeconapier.com) runs daily tours—either on foot or in a vintage Packard—through

the town, with guides pointing out details that may otherwise be overlooked. Take for example the ASB Bank building in stripped classical style that, on closer inspection, has traditional Maori motifs worked into the exterior. Or there’s the bronze *A Wave in Time* statue on Emerson Street depicting Sheila Williams, daughter of Napier’s most famous architect responsible for the rebuild, in 1920s regalia walking a sleek greyhound. She never owned one, but the sculptor felt the dog completed Shelia’s look, our animated German guide told us.

+ The region boasts a little more than 200 kilometers of off-road trails. **Napier City Bike Hire** (117 Marine Parade; 64-21/959-595; bikehirenapier.co.nz; bikes from NZ\$15 per hour), run by a friendly group of five girls—four Rachels, and an Anna who said she will answer to Rachel—hires bikes out by the hour or day, and is only a few minutes walk from the Masonic.

Take your wheels for a spin along the Colonnade on Marine Parade and the iconic Sound Shell. Both are part of a strip of land that emerged from the sea during the quake. There’s also a wide path hugging the shoreline, popular with both pedestrians and cyclists.

Stop by the new viewing platform jutting out into the bay, which also opened in December, before heading south. On the rapidly developing waterfront you’ll pass a

mini-golf course, playgrounds, a bike track and skate park for kids, and the National Aquarium, before the buildings give way to a quieter shoreline.

DINE

+ Masonic Hotel's restaurant, **Emporium Eatery & Bar** (64-6/835-0013; emporiumbar.co.nz; meal for two NZ\$80) is a casual indoor/outdoor dining and drinking hangout with inventive thin-crust pizzas and a lengthy (and educational) artisanal cocktail and craft beer menu.

+ Also close to the hotel is **Hapi Kai** (89 Hastings St.; 64-6/561-0142; hapi.nz; salad boxes for two NZ\$20) a newly opened vegan raw food café. At lunchtime the takeaway spot sells hearty gourmet salad trays (perfect for tucking into a bike bag for longer trips) with fillings like chunky almond and sun-dried tomato chili, and a smoky lime and coriander cauliflower rice.

DRINK

+ Napier is set in the Hawke's Bay region, which is famous for its wine, and south—a little more than an hour by bike—on the Te Awanga coast is the region's newest vineyard, **Elephant Hill** (86 Clifton Rd., Te Awanga; 64-6/872-6060; elephanthill.co.nz; tasting NZ\$5 per person). The facility is exceedingly modern, with a white and turquoise interior and even an infinity pool as a water

feature. *Cuisine Good Food Guide 2015*, New Zealand's authority on the country's dining and drinking scene, listed it among its top winery restaurants. Those stopping in for a wine tasting can sample duelling versions of the Sauvignon Blanc; the pricier Reserve comes from vines nearer the ocean, which grow in tougher soil and therefore produce hardier, and tastier, grapes.

+ Closer to the town center is New Zealand's oldest winery, **Mission Estate** (198 Church Rd.; 64-6/845-9350; missionestate.co.nz; tasting NZ\$5 per person including souvenir glass), which aesthetically could not be further from the steel and glass of Elephant Hill. Founded in 1851 by French missionaries, the vineyard is still owned by the Marist order, and if you look to your left while driving in, there's a row of Muscat grapes that were grafted from the original stock brought to the country in 1838.

+ Next door is another integral player in the country's wine scene, the **Church Road Winery** (150 Church Rd.; 64-6/833-8234; churchroad.co.nz; NZ\$5-\$15 for a tasting, there's also a free tasting of three wines), which traces its history back to 1897. It was here that the country's first commercial Cabernet Sauvignon was produced, in 1949.

Though the country's winemaking has expanded to other regions, most notably on the South Island, many vino fans still flock to Hawke's Bay to pay homage to the history of the drink, and to the glorious age of Gatsby. +

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF EMPORIUM EATERY & BAR; COURTESY OF HAPI KAI; COURTESY OF MISSION ESTATE



FROM LEFT: Get fired up at Emporium Eatery & Bar; a symphony of salad at Hapi Kai raw food café; Mission Estate at night.

A hooded top
by Joe Chia.

Profoundly Fashionable

From Plato to pet fish, the inspirations behind today's hottest Malaysian clothing lines swim deep. **Mark Lean** spotlights a few covetable designers whose substance shines through their style.

IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, Malaysia's fashion scene has taken a dramatic about-turn. A new generation of designers has jettisoned the wedding gowns, the cheongsams and the chintz in favor of their own evolving fashion narratives that are equal parts elegant and eclectic. Here, five designers you'll be hearing more of in the years to come.

JOE CHIA

Joe Chia's minimalist aesthetic is quickly making him a name to watch in the international fashion scene. Besides Kuala Lumpur, his clothes are currently stocked in Milan, London, Florence, Amsterdam, St. Petersburg, Madrid, Los Angeles, New York and Shanghai. Chia's utilitarian take on fashion is a commentary on recent world events influenced by street style. So expect structured hooded tops, cropped jackets and sportswear-type pants that veer on the right side of casual. Chia says that his designs for men and women are imbued with his personal experiences: "the things we see and learn, including world happenings." Reflecting recent headlines, his Spring/Summer 2016 menswear collection grapples with weighty issues like terrorism and military control. Chia says that though he's inspired by military elements, the creative spirit behind his clothes denotes freedom. "It's the realization that violence doesn't solve issues," he says, "and that changes start with us." joechia.com.



ALIA BASTAMAM

If Donna Karan and Diane von Furstenberg had a Malaysian love child, she would be fashion designer Alia Bastamam. In the five years since the Kuala Lumpur native launched her gilt-to-the-max eponymous label and the more street-inspired diffusion line Alia B., she has been working towards designs that complement a woman's sense of style, rather than overpower it. That said, Bastamam, who studied fashion locally at the Raffles College of Higher Education, is known for show-stopping, figure-hugging outfits that require larger-

than-life personalities to do them justice. She says that her recent collections have been unrestrained exercises in glamour, composed of "rich fabrication, sequins, fine lace and hand-sewn embellishments" that easily would equip any society girl to take over the red carpet. But for her recent collection—a composite of form-accentuating lemon-yellow dresses, and flowing cream and white shifts—Bastamam is planning to pare down the ostentation and amp up the lightness and the playfulness that informed her first resort collection, back in 2011. "I want to bring back comfort for my clients," she says, "because that's why I entered this industry in the first place: to design and create pieces that I would want to wear myself." aliabastamam.com.

TENGKU SYAHMI

Kuala Lumpur-based designer Tengku Syahmi is a little bit obsessed with his pet fish. The Siamese fighting fish, also known as betta fish, have splashed their way into his heart—and recent collection. "I love to see duels between two fighting fishes; when they get agitated, their fins flare out and it is a beautiful sight," says Syahmi. "The fins remind me of pleats!" Syahmi's women's label, Tsyahmi, is essentially a fashion think tank: the designer toys with and reimagines everyday elements, from tie-dye

Bold silhouettes
by Tengku
Syahmi. ABOVE: A
breezy look from
Alia Bastamam's
latest collection.

BELOW: Alia
Bastamam.





Artist and clothing designer Chan Man Chien. BELOW: A honeycomb-weave silk dress in Chan's latest collection.

prints inspired by Jackson Pollock to fish fins to create exquisitely proportioned outfits. Syahmi, who won the Most Promising Designer Award at the Malaysian International Fashion Week in 2009, is flexing his creative muscles with the Betta collection, made up of poly stretch A-line palazzo-cut pants in monochromatic shades reflecting the structural themes of the fish, obi-inspired overcoats, and slip tops with statement sashes that accentuate one's back, all of which look stylishly on-point both by the pool or at a classy lunch. *tsyahmi.com*.

MAN CHIEN

In the world of designer Chan Man Chien, fashion is literally a canvas upon which she etches her seasonal artistic musings. Chan says her clothes are a synthesis of her family background—both her aunt and uncle are celebrated in the fine-art world—and her somewhat unconventional creative processes. Chan mines inspirations from diverse sources like Plato and Chinese calligraphy. “We should question the meaning behind every aspect that we’ve been fed,” she says, “to seek truth, and to identify manipulative intentions.” So it’s scant surprise that her early 2016 collection dives headfirst into concepts like projected realities and

mind manipulation: heavy ideas, no doubt, but through Chan’s lens, these notions are not only palatable, but wearable. The outfits, made from Chan’s current favorite material—honeycomb-weave silk, a type of silk that retains form and structure easily—are sure to turn heads. Her use of fabrics, prints and textures encompasses inventive techniques like matching sheer silks with brusque rubber-paint strokes, and culminate in creations that are thought-provoking showstoppers. *manchien.com*.

PEARLY WONG

Pearly Wong’s designs are androgynous and arresting. A graduate of the Fashion Institute of Technology, she set up her own label back in 2012 when she released a capsule collection of oversized, unisex, minimalist pieces with a measure of Japanese avant garde to the delight of fashion non-conformists. In the intervening years, her striking creations have taken on personalities of their own, and now are sold in Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and at pop-up store Q206 in Berlin. During her Spring/Summer 2016 collection shown at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in Berlin, Wong launched a sequence of utilitarian outfits in her signature black and white depicting her fascination with science fiction, coupled with a play on textures and jarring prints. *pearlywong.co*. +



INSIDER'S TAKE



Azreezal Hafidz

A fashion stylist and former editor of *Glam Lelaki*, the country's leading Malay-language men's fashion magazine.

Where to shop for menswear

“**Khoon Hooi** (*khoonhooi.com*) sometimes makes customize pieces for me so I adore him.

Thisappear Plus (*fb.com/thisappearpl*), a multilabel store stocking lines by Joe Chia and Justin Chew, is also a go-to.”

Favorite looks

“I am in love with **Khoon Hooi**'s neoprene sweater; it is one of my best investments.”

On Malaysia's retail scene

“Online shopping website **Fashionvalet.com** just opened their first store, so that's an achievement for both the founder Vivy Yusof and the country's overall fashion scene.”



Jacky Hussein

A copywriter at Leo Burnett Malaysia and former deputy editor of *Cosmopolitan Malaysia*.

Favorite designers

“I love **Ezzati Amira** (*fb.com/ezzatiamira*) for her feminine-fusion style, and **Afiq Mohamed**'s (*fb.com/AfiqMOfficial*) edgy silhouettes.”

On the local fashion scene

“I like how Kuala Lumpur Fashion Week Ready to Wear came into the picture two years ago, and how the event attracts and intrigues people enough so that they buy local designs.”

How style is born

“Designers get their inspirations from everything from traditional Melayu Riau motifs to current headlines, to what is happening in their lives and surroundings.”

Ice Lens, a sculpture
by Heather Ackroyd
and Dan Harvey, who
visited Svalbard with
artist David Buckland.



Art in the Arctic

A group of intrepid curators are turning the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard into an unlikely—and geopolitically significant—destination for contemporary art. By **Richard Godwin**

ON FIRST IMPRESSION, the remote Arctic islands of Svalbard do not scream “happening art destination.” Passing through security at the airport in Longyearbyen—the entry point to Spitsbergen, the main island—lacks the grandeur of arriving at Santa Lucia station for the Venice Biennale. And the climate is less of a draw than, say, Art Basel in Miami Beach.

You expect midwinter in the Arctic Circle to be cold, but at 20 degrees below zero, the polar wind feels unfair. If you do dare unglove for a hurried iPhone snap, you’ll find the light conditions pretty unforgiving, too: for about three months of the year, an interminable midnight paints everything a spectral blue. Driving off down the airport road, all I could really discern were the faint outlines of distant mountains, a few pieces of rusting industrial machinery, and a pervasive sense of my own insignificance.

Considering I was only here for an exhibition opening, it all felt bracingly intrepid. I was one of a small party of critics, gallerists and art administrators who had come for the opening of a show called “Glacier” by Joan Jonas, the veteran video artist. The exhibition was at the Kunsthall Svalbard, a new outpost of the Northern Norway Art Museum, which lies 965 kilometers to the south in the city of Tromsø, on the mainland.

Many things in Svalbard are the northernmost examples of themselves (the church, the ATM, the Thai restaurant), and as of 2015 the Kunsthall Svalbard has claimed the title of the world’s northernmost exhibition space. Its director, Knut Ljøgodt, hopes that the handsome, wood-lined gallery will capitalize on Svalbard’s bleak beauty and transform it into a new frontier for art lovers—while simultaneously cementing Norway’s cultural dominance of the archipelago. Ljøgodt,

COURTESY OF HEATHER ACKROYD & DAN HARVEY/CAPE FAREWELL



The Svalbard
Global Seed
Vault.

a mischievous Anglophile with unruly red hair, said he got the idea from London's Tate gallery, which has opened branches in Liverpool and Cornwall. "I thought it would be interesting to enlarge the museum in other geographical locations," he told me.

At the exhibition opening, Queen Sonja of Norway removed her snow boots in the entrance along with the great and good of Svalbard society. There was speechifying about the "New Arctic" from the assembled dignitaries, then Her Majesty snipped the ribbon while a man in traditional Sami dress sang a folk song and Jonas's glaciers melted in the background.

Svalbard has held a mystical allure ever since it was discovered by the Dutch explorer Willem Barents in 1596, as he searched for the then-mythical Northeast Passage. Early attempts to establish permanent bases fared poorly, however. According to a 19th-century naval officer named Frederick William Beechey, the British once offered convicts their freedom if they would spend the winter establishing a whale-blubber-processing facility in Svalbard. When the ships landed, the prisoners were "so struck with horror at the desolate appearance of their intended abode," they begged to be taken back to prison. Many subsequent missions succumbed to scurvy, squabbling, exposure or polar bears.

It was only with the advent of commercial coal mining at the end of the 19th century that Svalbard developed permanent settlements. In 1925, the Svalbard Treaty—



Longyearbyen,
the largest town
in Svalbard.

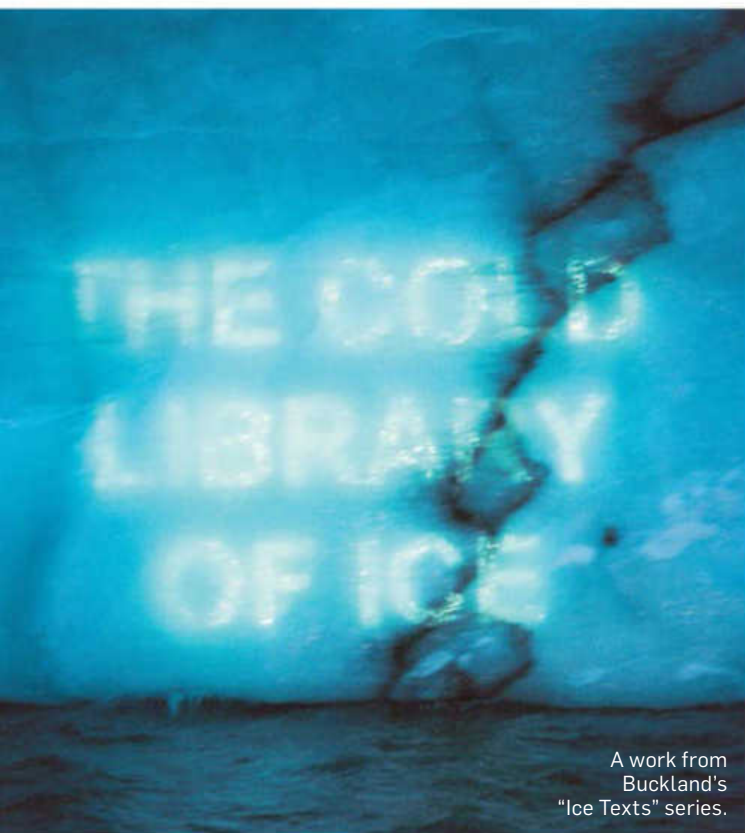


Exhibits at
the Svalbard
Museum.

which was ratified by 42 nations including Norway, Russia, Britain, France and the United States—made Svalbard a Norwegian territory, but with the unusual caveat that all signatories would have equal fishing, hunting and mineral rights. A Norwegian state mining company, Store Norske, has operated out of Longyearbyen since 1916, and in 1931, a Soviet state mining company called Arktikugol established mines elsewhere on the islands.

By the 1960s, the Soviet population outnumbered the Norwegian population, and throughout the Cold War, relations remained, well, frosty. The Soviet miners were banned from mingling with their Norwegian counterparts, and to this day the communities are completely isolated. The Russian mines, with their eerie Soviet sculptures extolling the glories of coal, are now in terminal decline. But as the ice melts and new resource opportunities arise, it seems Vladimir Putin is reluctant to withdraw from the region.

The Norwegians, on the other hand, have diversified their interests with some success. Svalbard has been repositioned as "the gateway to the Arctic," and daily scheduled flights have made it a destination for mountaineers, ecotourists and climate-change-sensitive politicians (British Prime Minister David Cameron and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon have both made trips). Longyearbyen is now a pretty happening place, dotted with parking lots for snowmobiles, cozy cafés and



A work from
Buckland's
"Ice Texts" series.

children's playgrounds. There's a population of around 2,000, drawn from more than 40 nationalities, mostly young, adventurous and entrepreneurial.

Since 1993, the town has also been home to UNIS, one of the leading Arctic biology research centers in the world. Not too far away is the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, a library of plant species designed so that if mankind really screws up, survivors can dig out the seeds and have another go. The handsome mid-century Store Norske leisure complex is now home to Huset, an excellent restaurant where you can wash down dishes of foraged berries, reindeer and Arctic marine life with wines from what one patriotic local described as "the

finest cellar outside of France." The fact that there's no tax on alcohol keeps spirits high at the various nightclubs, with parties spilling outside as soon as someone checks his aurora borealis app and realizes the northern lights are overhead.

And now there's culture, too, to complete the gentrification process. While the Kunstmuseum is the first national art institution with a presence here, Svalbard already had a private exhibition space, Galleri Svalbard, as well as the Svalbard Museum, the Kulturhus arts venue, the Polarjazz Festival, and well-established artist-exchange programs. The conceptual artist David Buckland has set up numerous cultural expeditions through his Cape Farewell project, which launched in 2001, attracting artists including Antony Gormley and Rachel Whiteread.

Ljøgodt admits that the gallery is not there solely to entertain the locals. The NOAA forecasts that the Arctic Ocean will be ice-free in summer by 2050, a development that will make some people very rich. Cargo ships are now a more frequent sight along the Northeast Passage—the shortcut to China that Barents dreamed of—and the new port in Longyearbyen is designed as a gateway to that route. An even greater bounty could lie in the coal, oil and gas reserves under the melting ice throughout the Arctic Ocean. Russia and Norway have staked claims to parts of the continental shelf that lie below Svalbard, while the U.S., Canada and Denmark are also vying for position in the region. Despite its distance, China, too, is muscling in, with a Chinese billionaire recently attempting to buy one of the last parts of Svalbard still in private hands. "Norway needs to put its mark on this part of the world," Ljøgodt said. "That's why the politicians are so keen to support the gallery."

Amid all of this, the Svalbard authorities hope that encouraging reflection among the yawning icescapes will help to preserve what makes the archipelago so special. Ljøgodt also realizes Svalbard's potential to provide the art world with an edgier sort of glamour. "Look at all the people who go to Venice or other festivals each year," he said. "Why shouldn't they go to the very top of the world to see exciting contemporary art?" +

THE DETAILS

GETTING THERE

Finnair, SAS and Norwegian Air fly to the Longyearbyen airport via a stopover in Oslo, Tromsø or Helsinki.

TOUR OPERATOR

Red Savannah A six-day tour of the main island includes snowmobile rides, polar bear sightings

and accommodations in an abandoned radio station. redsavannah.com; from US\$5,991 per person.

RESTAURANT

Huset An old mining complex was transformed in 1977 to create this excellent restaurant serving reindeer, seal and

other seasonal fare. Longyearbyen; huset.com; prix fixe NOK600.

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

Galleri Svalbard A space that shows works by Norwegian artists like Kåre Tveter as well as maps and lithographs used in an 1838

expedition. Longyearbyen; gallerisvalbard.no.

Kulturhus This Longyearbyen cultural center hosts various concerts, lectures and festivals throughout the year. lokalstyre.no.

Kunsthall Svalbard The world's northernmost art museum shows contemporary works like

Joan Jonas's *Glacier*, which was inspired by the Arctic landscape.

Longyearbyen; nnkm.no.

Svalbard Museum

Opened in 1979, this exhibition space features displays on whaling, mining and the region's eclectic history. Longyearbyen; svalbardmuseum.no.

Incredible India



1-7 March 2016, Rishikesh
YOG MAHAKUMBH

8-12 March 2016, Haridwar

MEMYSELF & UTTARAKHAND

Ayurveda, yoga and meditation centres, Ashrams, health centres, retreats and high-end spas. Add to these, the tranquil beauty of the Himalayas and we have a place just right for our mental, physical and spiritual well-being.



Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board, Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Paryatan Bhawan, Garhi Cantt., Dehradun-248003, Ph: -91+0135-2559898, Website: www.uttarakhandtourism.gov.in

Easy Like Essaouira

Far from the crowds of Marrakesh, this coastal town—with its cool sea breezes, authentic *riads* and relaxed medina—is a little slice of Morocco as it used to be. BY ALEXANDRA MARSHALL



Camels and surfers share the sand on Essaouira's Tagharte beach.

IN FRANCE, WHERE I HAVE LIVED for the past 10 years, there are strong historical links to Morocco, and many French travelers know the country well. Everyone goes for different reasons—to laze by a pool, to visit family, to shop in the historic medinas. Some love the luxury bubble of Marrakesh; some, myself included, aren't so keen. But there is one place all of them seem to agree on, across the spectrum of taste and budget: Essaouira.

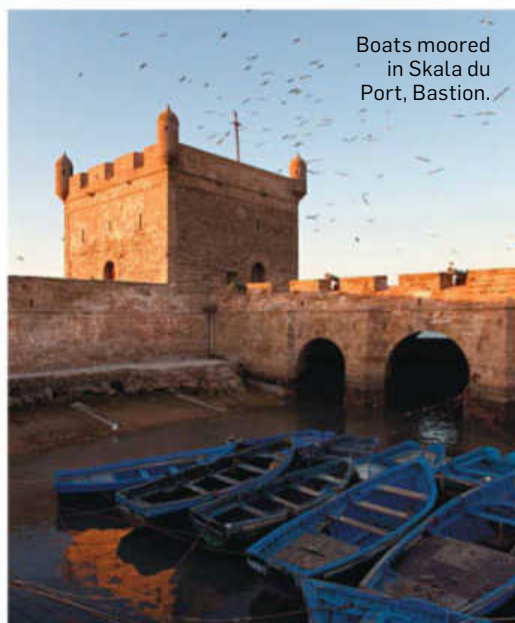
A small seaside town with impressive 18th-century fortifications, Essaouira sits on Morocco's Atlantic coast, a three-hour drive west of Marrakesh. Strong trade winds make it one of the world's great surf spots, and it has enjoyed a healthy tourist trade since the 1960s, when hippie icons like Jimi Hendrix and Cat Stevens made high-profile visits. Despite this, Essaouira remains peaceful, quaint and slow-paced. "It's lovely," a Moroccan friend told me earlier this year. "Relaxed and friendly." The idea is to take it easy: sit by the ocean, plop the kids on one of the rideable toy cars that ring the Place Moulay Hassan at the entrance of the medina, perhaps drink a beer in a sidewalk café.

Unlike in Marrakesh, there is no constantly changing hotel scene in Essaouira. "I arrived seventeen years ago," said Emma Wilson, who was working as a high-end London florist when she came on a vacation and promptly bought a house in the area. "It was a donkey town, without even good electricity." In the years since, she has transformed that little two-bedroom into Dar Emma, a popular guesthouse with traditional tiles and a sunny patio, and added Dar Beida—another, grander, property, styled with Midcentury furniture and gorgeous Berber rugs.

Things have modernized since then—today the electricity is fine—but in the azure-and-white medina, gently sandblasted by the winds that sweep through its narrow streets, there's still a relative lack of conventional hotels and a total lack of contemporary polish. People tend to stay in *riads* like Emma's: homes built around open-air courtyards to let the ocean breeze wash through.

On my first day in town I took a walk through the medina. Elsewhere in Morocco, the markets in these historic town centers can be overwhelming, but here, the jumble was harmonious. No one jostled me into his brother-in-law's shop for the very best caftans/slippers/jewelry/wooden boxes at obviously inflated prices. When I wanted to buy cotton beach throws, I easily found Fine Arts, a lovely spot around a corner, staffed by a graceful teenage girl who demurred when I hinted at haggling. (The general rule: proper shops with price tags tend not to negotiate. Elsewhere, vendors are flexible, but because starting rates tend to be low in Essaouira, don't expect discounts of more than 40 percent.) Of course there was stall after stall of trinkets of dubious value, herbalists peddling "natural Viagra for women," and Berber-rug salesmen who talked a good game. But the exchange was easy. "*Non, merci*," was taken for an answer, with a smile.

It was municipal election season when I was in town, and bands of volunteers with loudspeakers and political party T-shirts went hooting and chanting up and down the medina's three main thoroughfares. Women in bright head-scarves joined the crowd, scattering flyers and greeting friends on the sidelines. During one of those impromptu parades, I wandered into a quieter corner of the medina and found Galerie Jama, a showroom filled with antique tribal rugs and heavily embroidered wool caftans from the 1940s. Its owner, Mustapha, is a



Boats moored
in Skala du
Port, Bastion.



Eucalyptus trees
shade the gardens
surrounding
Baoussala
guesthouse.

knowledgeable collector; he's also happy to send photos to shoppers abroad and ship internationally. If you happen to hanker for a tufted eggshell wool Beni Ourain rug, handmade in the Atlas Mountains by Berber nomads, Mustapha is your man.

The town's most formal restaurant, Salon Oriental, is in the English-colonial-inspired Heure Bleue Palais hotel, still steeped in the atmosphere of the mid 19th century, when it was built. "It's where we like to go for a night out," said the front-of-house manager at Umia, one of a handful of Western-fusion restaurants in town, where lovely fresh salads, grilled lobster and molten chocolate cake are served alongside updated Moroccan classics like a *pastilla* of duck confit. Heure Bleue Palais is a grown-up, historic version of the same hybrid concept. Its shady, central garden, dense with palms and ferns, is surrounded by a tiled courtyard where serious men in fezzes serve cocktails and neat assortments of snacks—crudités in a curry-cream-cheese dip, baby shrimp in herbed *fromage blanc* with house-made potato chips, followed by slow-cooked lamb shoulder with dried fruit, almonds and whole-wheat couscous.

The service there was gracious and the food carefully prepared, but it couldn't surpass Les Bretons du Sud, one of the famous stalls next to the fish market right outside the medina. A lunch-only spot under striped blue-and-white awnings among about a dozen others like it, it's as well known as the Salon Oriental, though on the opposite end of the polish spectrum. Ali, chief of the jokey on-site fishmongers, helped me select a beautiful sea bass and a handful of giant prawns from a rainbow selection that included dorado, mackerel and sardines. Having weighed them up and grilled them with a blend of cumin, paprika and lemon—Ali's version of *cher moula*—he served them with a simple tomato-and-sweet-onion salad and wedges

of fresh bread. After lunch, I took a stroll through the fish market. There, down a long pier, everyone from well-organized three-man teams to lone, veiled grandmothers hawked glistening anchovies, eel, hake and on and on. Neither ice nor refrigerators were anywhere to be seen; instead, vendors douse their catch with cups of water throughout the day to keep it from spoiling. Riotous gangs of seagulls attacked piles of waste, and anything left over was fodder for armies of cats.

Ah, those cats. Essaouira is home to a critical mass of strays, so generally well loved that there's a large mural of one just off the medina's main thoroughfare, Avenue d'Istiqlal. The donated scraps scattered on every street corner in the medina might strike Western eyes as unhygienic, but the kitties make fast work of them. The proud tom who policed the grounds around Umia was fatter and tamer than my two cats at home.

The cats completed a picture of earthy cheerfulness in Essaouira that I found more refreshing than an expert massage in a luxurious spa. "This has become my place," said Adil El Barhami, a guest at Le Douar des Arganiers, a contemporary four-room guesthouse with dashes of traditional design (and eight cats of its own) about half an hour



A Berber-rug vendor in Essaouira's medina.



A bathroom at Baoussala.



Homemade breads at Heure Bleue Palais.



Dar Beida combines Midcentury details with local designs.

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF HEURE BLEUE PALAIS HOTEL; COURTESY OF DAR BEIDA, OPPOSITE; FROM FAR LEFT: NEIL FARRIN/JAI/CORBIS; COURTESY OF BAOUSSALA

south of the town center. A naturalized German whose mother and father grew up in the medina of Casablanca, he first came to the region in 2011 and has been a regular ever since. “I’m looking for my own property here now. The people are so relaxed and open.”

I couldn’t have agreed more. That night I stayed at Baoussala, a complex of clay cottages in a cool eucalyptus grove. The first thing I did upon arrival was wander into their hammam, or Turkish steam bath. Powered by a wood fire, it was wreathed in steam and puffs of smoke that dissipated into a grove of sheltering trees.

Inside, sprawled on a yoga mat, naked except for a pair of loaner Crocs and covered chin-to-toe in tarlike, aromatic black soap, I lay utterly alone as steam swirled through a narrow beam of sunlight and water drip-drip-dripped down the walls. Finally, after scrubbing myself to a rosy pink and dousing myself with warm water,

I stumbled out to the patio, where the first dinner guests were sitting down at candlelit tables.

Baoussala was at capacity on my visit, but everywhere there was room to breathe. Brazilian music did battle with the distant sound of goats bleating and a rustle of wind in the trees. Abundant couches were scattered around secluded patios; guests passed through the vast open kitchen to ask the chef about recipes for carrot mousse or fish *tagine*. “This was supposed to be a vacation home for myself when I first started building it, fifteen years ago,” said Dominique Choupin, a former pharmaceutical industry executive from Paris who owns the six-room lodge. “I got a little carried away.” Who could blame her? ➤

THE DETAILS

GETTING THERE

The most convenient airport is in Marrakesh. From there, rent a car and drive three hours west.

HOTELS

Baoussala A *riad* with a convivial atmosphere and multiple patios for discreet lounging. Rooms are simple, spacious and charming. hotel-baoussala-essaouira.com; doubles from €100.

Dar Beida British expat Emma Wilson’s drop-dead-chic medina guesthouse. castlesinthesand.com; from €900 per week.

Dar Emma Dar Beida’s smaller

sister property. castlesinthesand.com; from €700 per week.

Heure Bleue Palais This colonial-inspired hotel was built on the ruins of an ancient hostel and offers fresh meze in the courtyard. heure-bleue.com; doubles from €153.

Le Douar des Arganiers A guesthouse exemplifying contemporary Moroccan design, with modern amenities and open fireplaces in every suite. douardesarganiers.com; doubles from €75.

RESTAURANTS

Les Bretons du Sud A lunch

stand at the port serving delicious grilled seafood. Prices vary based on the daily catch.

Océan Vagabond This cordoned-off snippet of beach just south of the medina is popular for sandwiches, pizzas and freshly pressed juices. oceanvagabond.com; mains €5–€11.

Salon Oriental Chef Ahmed Handour puts a modern twist on Moroccan classics like roasted monkfish with *ras el hanout*, eggplant and goat cheese. heure-bleue.com; mains €20–€30.

Umia Dinner includes ambitious dishes like scallop carpaccio and

apricot-coconut clafouti. 22 bis Rue Skala; 212-524/783-395; mains €15.

SHOPS

Fine Arts Maroc Cotton and linen hammam towels complement a well-edited selection of raffia wedges and slides. 33 Rue Allal Ben Abdellah; 212-615/910-985.

Galerie Jama A serious collection of antique rugs, pottery, caftans and hand-painted wedding chests. 22 Rue Ibn Rochd; 212-670/016-429.

the guide

SPAS OF THE FUTURE

Though many of Asia's wellness traditions can trace their roots back thousands of years, we would argue that there has never been a better time to enjoy them than right now. Across the continent, spas are showcasing new and ever-more diverse offerings for connoisseurs. From state-of-the-art technologies to hard-to-find holistic healing practices to visually stunning settings, here are the places to recharge body, mind and spirit. **BY DIANA HUBBELL**

LIGHTS STIMULATE
ALPHA BRAIN
WAVES AT DII
MEDICAL SPA, IN
BANGKOK.

OUTRAGEOUS AMENITIES

Bored of humdrum oil massages and reflexology? From Aquatonic pools to salt domes, these all-stars offer over-the-top facilities for your pampering pleasure.

BALI

Ayana Resort & Spa

There's a reason a dip in the ocean is so restorative: according to the 5,000-year-old practice of thalassotherapy—from the Greek word *thalassa* (sea)—those mineral-rich waters can help the body detox, relieve symptoms of skin disorders and boost cardiovascular function. Soak in all the benefits at this thalasso spa, one of the largest in the world, where the Aquatonic pool contains 700 million liters of saltwater pumped directly from the Indian Ocean. ayanaresort.com; 25-minute Under Water massage plus two hours in the Aquatonic pool Rp954,000.

HONG KONG

Salt Spa

Halotherapy originated from a centuries-old tradition in Eastern Europe in which patients spent hours in natural salt caves, where the air reputedly alleviates respiratory conditions. At these urban approximations, patients relax in snow-white, salt-crusted rooms inhaling dry sodium chloride aerosol particles pumped out by a halogenerator. This shot of saline-saturated oxygen can boost flagging energy levels. saltspa.com.hk; 60-minute facial from HK\$1,180.

SINGAPORE

ESPA at Resorts World Sentosa

Sweat out all those pesky toxins with a rest in a sweltering Turkish-style hammam. The 10,000-square-meter ESPA spa is decked out with ergonomically designed benches and oversized rain showers. When you can't take the heat anymore, shock your system in the spa's ice fountain. rwsentosa.com; 25-minute Revitalizing Hammam Cleanse S\$125.

PHUKET

Kata Rocks

In the chromatherapy chamber in this new Phuket venue, slowly shifting shades of light are designed to relax your psyche. After basking in the rainbow, take a sneak peek at some of the other unconventional extras, including a water bed-massage room and a MetroNaps pod for snoozing. katarocks.com; Thai massage Bt4,100 in the chromotherapy room.



ESPA VITALITY POOL
Bottom, from left:
AQUATONIC POOL
AT AYANA RESORT &
SPA BALI; CRYSTAL
THERAPY HAND
TREATMENT AT
KATA ROCKS.





THE LUXE HOUSE, IN SINGAPORE. Right, from top: THE BARAI, HUA HIN; HEATED POOL WITH A VIEW AT AMAN TOKYO.



REGAL ROOMS

These design-centric spas and treatment rooms are equal parts art and indulgence.

HUA HIN

The Barai

Renowned Thai architect Lek Bunnag designed this beachfront space, which exudes an almost mystical vibe. Your mind may well wander to ancient temples as you stroll along the colonnaded courtyard and its central reflecting pool at the heart of the complex, which is made up of eight residential spa suites and 18 treatment rooms. thebarai.com; 90-minute *Chakra Energy Balance* from Bt4,200.

SINGAPORE

The Luxe House

This swank newcomer proves that sometimes too much is exactly enough. True to its name, The Luxe House channels old-school opulence with velvet drapery, dark wood,

dazzling chandeliers and ornate floral arrangements. You'll feel positively royal while staff tend to overstressed heads, shoulders, knees and toes. theluxehouse.com; 60-minute *Acupressure Foot Therapy* S\$158.

TOKYO

Aman Tokyo

Zen minimalism gets a sexy, urban spin at Aman's first inner-city outpost. The clean lines and classic materials like *washi* paper and camphor wood, are enough to make design fans drool, but what really seals the deal is the view—the heated 30-meter pool comes with floor-to-ceiling windows for a panorama of the glittering skyscrapers of Shinjuku all the way to Mount Fuji in the distance. aman.com; 150-minute *Aman Tokyo Signature Journey* ¥150,000.

BEIJING

Rosewood Beijing

China's frenetic, smoggy capital can take its toll on even the toughest travelers, which is why you might be tempted to hide away in the plush little cocoon that is Sense spa and stay forever. Not to worry, the designers have anticipated your needs—the five spa suites are ideal for overnight stays and the glass-domed pool surrounded by greenery provides a tranquil place to unwind. Creative local touches peppered throughout the hotel include ink-brush paintings, photography and other artwork inspired by Chinese poet Bei Dao's *Rose of Time*. It is like getting a world-class massage in a stunning fine-art gallery. rosewoodhotels.com; 60-minute *Sense Signature treatment* RMB810.

LUSH LOCALES

Location, location, location. Achingly lovely vistas abound at these all-natural knockouts.



YOGA ON THE BEACH AT QUY NHON. Below, from left: TREETOP YOGA SHALA PLATFORM AT TRI, IN SRI LANKA; NATURE AND NURTURE AT FOUR SEASONS GOLDEN TRIANGLE.



PALAWAN

The Huma Island Resort & Spa

No, that's not a filter or Photoshop trickery: the ocean really is that luminous shade of teal. It's hard not to notice when you're in one of these overwater treatment rooms—each one sports a glass floor, through which you'll be able to gaze straight to the coral-speckled sandy bottom while your masseuse slathers aromatic virgin coconut oil on your back. humaisland.com; Kapuruan Signature massage P2,500.

KOGGALA LAKE, SRI LANKA

Tri

It doesn't get greener than this eco-haven on the country's largest lake. The delicate scent of cinnamon bark perfumes the air, while frangipani, tea and other foliage thrive along the resort's pathways. Huge windows in the spa display the forest canopy and the treetop yoga shala platform allows practitioners to salute the sun above a waving bamboo grove. trilanka.com; 60-minute Full-Body massage Rs10,000.

CHIANG RAI

Four Seasons Golden Triangle

Though the elephants are doing all the work, it can still be exhausting to ride one, what with all the climbing and clenching. And since the main point of visiting this ultimate-luxury Bill Bensley-designed tented camp is to bond with the gentle giants who have found refuge in these jungles, you're going to need a lot of post-pachyderm pampering. Head to the open-air spa rooms, stilted cabanas on the side of a deceptively high hill, for a Mahout Recovery massage amid butterflies and birdsongs. Or, order a treatment to your tent for views across the Thai-Laos-Burmese border. fourseasons.com; 90-minute Mahout Recovery massage Bt6,000.

QUY NHON, VIETNAM

Avani Quy Nhon Resort & Spa

For grownups still very much in touch with their inner child, this treehouse-inspired spa adds just the right amount of whimsy. Unlike your nostalgic pad of old, however, this hideaway protrudes from the side of a mountain overlooking the South China Sea. avanihotels.com/quynhon; Avani Signature Touch VND1,500,000.

SIX SENSES SPA
CHENGDU. Below:
FRESH SCRUBS AT
BANYAN TREE SPA
IN BINTAN; ANANDA
SPA OFFERS YOGA IN
THE HIMALAYAS.



CULTURAL QUEST

Rooted in their regional wellness traditions, these spas provide a much-appreciated sense of place.



BORACAY, PHILIPPINES **Mandala Spa & Resort Villas**

Digging deep into the traditional healing practices of the Philippines, Mandala Spa offers a series of Hilot-inspired treatments. Banana leaves slicked with coconut oil are used to identify problem spots in the body, then a vacuum cup is used to restore equilibrium. mandalaspaaandresortvillas.com; 105-minute Hilot Trilogy P4,300.

CHENGDU, CHINA **Six Senses Qing Cheng Mountain**

Taoism's teachings of balance and harmony infuse virtually every element of the spa. After a session with a traditional Chinese medicine specialist, try classic treatments such as *gua sha*, which stimulates circulation, *chi nei tsang*, which detoxifies the digestive system, and *tui na*, which uses martial arts techniques. 86-28/8728-9871; 60-minute Chinese Reflexology session RMB580.

INDIA **Ananda Spa**

Deeply entrenched in the holistic traditions of ayurveda, this Himalayan retreat is all about employing ancient methods to modern ailments. Your journey kicks off with a private consultation, in which a specialist prescribes a set diet and any number of the dozens of ayurvedic treatments to get your *kapha*, *vata* and *pitta* doshas back in sync. anandaspa.com; seven-night Ayurvedic Rejuvenation retreat from US\$5,117 per person or US\$7,497, double.

BINTAN, INDONESIA **Banyan Tree Bintan**

Indonesian-inspired treatments for him and her abound at Banyan Tree Bintan; there's a four-century-old Javanese ritual designed to purify royal brides-to-be, while gents can boost their stamina with an ultra deep-tissue Balinese Boreh massage. banyantreespa.com; 150-minute Javanese Lulur ritual Rp3,390.



FROM TOP: SETH POWERS/COURTESY OF SIX SENSE QING CHENG MOUNTAIN; COURTESY OF BANYAN TREE SPA BINTAN; COURTESY OF ANANDA IN THE HIMALAYAS

TRICKED-OUT TREATMENTS

Science, innovation and relaxation come together in spa experiences that feel plucked from the future, but will transport your skin into the past.

BANGKOK

Dii

Starfish goo, royal honey, champagne, silk threads, pearls, red algae: Divana Spa taps everything from the deep sea to the haberdashery for the secrets of perfect skin. Dii medical spa, in Central Embassy, is the brand's most science-steeped outlet with a bevy of pioneering treatments like an electroporation facial that deposits peptide serum obtained from starfish into the skin. If you prefer the simple luxuries, try the golden silk scrub followed by an antioxidant champagne bath. "It is cutting-edge science mixed with ancient wisdom," says the spa's research and development director Apiradee Herunramdej, "and at the end of the day, it is all about feeling good." *dii-divana.com*; Andaman Aura 120-minute treatment Bt8,500.

Bonus: There's a fifth branch opening on Sukhumvit Soi 11 this month.

BALI

Vietura Spa, Sofitel Nusa Dua

This antiaging clinic uses a Skin Analysis System machine to create a personalized map of your face and pinpoint the precise treatments needed to maximize your radiance. From gentle options like platelet-rich plasma therapy and micro-exfoliation to the more intense Endolift, which uses a peanut-oil extract for facial injections, you can tailor a program that's perfect for you. *sofitel-bali-nusadua.com*; carboxy facial activation therapy Rp1,300.

SINGAPORE

ClearSK

The professionals at ClearSK will lift, tuck, brighten and smooth any problem areas, from the top of your head to the tips of your toes, with the newest equipment and products from around the world. Thermage CPT uses hot and cold ultrasonic waves to break down and liquify fat cells, helping to restructure the face without surgery, while gentle pulses reduce the feeling of heat. This facility is more about beauty and dermatology than relaxation, but the results—up to two years of fresher looking skin—may well be worth it. *clearskgroup.com*; pricing varies by branch, full face and neck Thermage CPT package from around S\$4,000.



DII MEDICAL SPA, BANGKOK. Below, from left: CLEARSK, IN SINGAPORE; PERSONALIZE TREATMENTS AT VIETURA, BALI.



An escape to Pattaya has never been so memorable. Stay with Mövenpick Siam Hotel Pattaya and enjoy impeccable, Swiss-style service with a warm touch of Thai hospitality. Luxuriate in spacious rooms with bold, modern designs, and take full advantage of the hotel's extensive offerings, which include contemporary dining, a distinctive lagoon-style pool and unbroken access to the idyllic Na Jomtien Beach. With the myriad sites and attractions of Pattaya just minutes away, Mövenpick Siam Hotel Pattaya is sure to become your preferred destination for a revitalising beach escape. Enjoy our opening rate starting from THB 4,999++.

Passionately Swiss.™



Mövenpick Siam Hotel Pattaya
55 Moo 2 Sukhumvit Road, Km. 156.5, Na Jomtien
Sattahip, Chonburi 20250, Thailand
Phone +66 33 078 888, Fax +66 33 078 777
hotel.pattaya@movenpick.com, www.movenpick.com

www.movenpick.com

Opening in Pattaya 🇨🇭 ready to make memories.



upgrade

|| TRAVEL SMARTER ||



The Mileage Makeover

If you're like most travelers, you're not making the most of your points. We've identified the most common challenges, come up with smart solutions and figured out the top strategies for a rewarding 2016. BY GRANT MARTIN AND CHRISTOPHER KUCWAY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY OLIVER MUNDAY



0123 8466 1397 123

If You're AN AIMLESS ACCUMULATOR

With all the loyalty programs out there, it's easy to end up with little stashes of points that hang around like those handfuls of foreign coins you find in your pockets after overseas trips. But just because the amounts are small isn't a reason to ignore points; they are baked into the price of your hotel room or car rental, and you should get the full value of what you paid for. Here's how to turn small pools of miles into useful, redeemable balances.

Take inventory. You don't have to keep count yourself. Use an app that accesses your accounts and collects all your balances in one place; just be sure to choose wisely (see "Track Happy," on the next page).



Transfer what you can. Don't let those Sri Lankan Airlines miles go to waste—even obscure loyalty programs have partnerships that let you exchange points with other brands. Because the options for shuffling balances can seem endless, start with a goal, such as moving soon-to-expire points or bundling several smaller balances into your largest one to score a free ticket. Then start scouring program websites for partnership details.

Let's say you have 23,000 United miles and need another 2,000 to book a round-trip flight. If you have 1,200 Hertz Gold Plus Rewards you know you won't be using, you can swap them for 1,000 United miles (at a rate of 600 points to 500 miles). Toss in those 6,000 languishing Wyndham points—which are not nearly enough for a free night—and that gives you another 1,200 miles.

Points.com makes it simple to transfer points throughout hotel and airline brands: sign up for an account, link your programs,

and click "exchange" to see which moves are eligible. The ability to swap between certain programs is limited, but Points.com allows some otherwise impossible trades—moving miles between Virgin America and JetBlue, for instance. Unfortunately, the site doesn't offer any insight into whether a particular use of points is a smart idea.

Spend small balances on small pleasures. Can't muster enough points for a flight or a night? You can still squeeze value from those rewards. You can buy e-books and albums in United's MileagePlus portal (Taylor Swift's *1989* will take care of 1,600 miles). A magazine subscription can be had for 400 miles through sites like **MagsforMiles**. Delta allows you to exchange points for, among other things, an Amazon gift card. Or, give instead of get: Make-A-Wish accepts donations of as few as 500 and 1,000 miles, respectively.

If You're A FREQUENT-FLYING FAMILY

When you travel with a spouse, kids and other relatives, you can rack up miles quickly. But those points usually go into separate accounts, and airlines, in particular, make it expensive to combine miles. Transferring 10,000 American Airlines points to your spouse, for example, will cost you US\$125—plus a US\$20 transaction fee. You have a few options:

Join a family-friendly mileage program.

It might not help much with the miles you've already accumulated, but a handful of companies allow relatives to combine their miles for free. "JetBlue is really out in front of the other airlines in terms of family accounts, allowing for a family of up to seven people to pool points they earn," says Edward Pizzarello, who writes the points blog *Pizza in Motion*. British Airways (BA) also allows families to share miles in household accounts, and Qantas gives flyers a certain number of free transfers per year.

Pooling can be powerful. Typically, a BA ticket in premium economy from



New York to London will yield 3,458 frequent-flyer miles. For a family of four, that adds up to 13,832 miles—enough to get Mom a round-trip business-class seat between London and Paris.

Top off your accounts. A few flexible programs, including American Express Membership Rewards and Starwood Preferred Guest, permit free transfers to airline, hotel and other reward accounts, meaning you can boost balances to a usable level.

Track Happy

Keep tabs on all your points with apps that are powerful, reliable and—most important of all—secure.

For US\$49 a year, **TripIt Pro** lets users track most major airline, hotel and car programs. (Notable exceptions: shopping loyalty programs.) The interface is sleek, and because the company is owned by software giant SAP, the security controls are among the most reliable out there.

AwardWallet is one of the oldest tracking sites, launched in 2004. It connects to nearly 700 programs, from Singapore Airlines' Kris Flyer, to Cathay Pacific's Asia Miles, to the Turkish Airlines' program Miles & Smiles. There's a long list of other Asia-based carriers included, so this is worth checking out regardless of which international airport is your base. The basic app is free, but you have to pay US\$5 to get the full range of features.

—BRIAN KELLY



If You're DESPERATELY SEEKING STATUS

Many frequent flyers don't care about free flights, rooms or rentals—they're interested only in getting special treatment from airlines because of their elite status. Perks for VIPs, like complimentary upgrades and waived fees, are doled out on a tiered basis: the more you fly, the more you receive. Status can be especially valuable if you're delayed or your flight is canceled; elites are the first to be rebooked.

Previously, flyers reached elite status based on how many miles they flew, so you'd just pick the most convenient airline. Over the past year, however, a number of airlines in each of the major frequent-flyer plans have overhauled their programs to include a spending minimum in their calculation for elite status. So hold on to your wallets, because that means in many instances you don't just need to fly 25,000 miles to achieve the lowest-tier status, you also need to spend US\$3,000 with that airline. That might not bother high-spending business travelers, but for frugal flyers (or those with frugal bosses), the new provisions can dramatically affect a year's elite status. To ascend to VIP:

Juggle your connections. Several airlines still bestow the elite crown based only on miles flown, but what if your home airport isn't a hub for a particular carrier? Be creative with your planning. For instance, flying out of Bangkok, obviously a Thai Airways stronghold, nets

11,000,000

The cost, in miles, of an electric BMWi3 through Lufthansa's Miles & More program.

fewer Cathay Pacific options for Marco Polo Club loyalists. But if the boss is paying and you've got the time, connect and earn. Say you have a meeting in Perth: Thai Airways flies direct from Bangkok, but if you are willing to tack on as little as three hours per leg, you can rack up your Marco Polo miles by flying Cathay via either Singapore or Hong Kong.

Look for back doors into the club.

Airline alliances offer sneaky alternatives for claiming those VIP perks. Take, for instance, ConnectMiles, the recently launched rewards program for Panamanian carrier Copa, part of the Star Alliance airline network. To reach gold status on United, you need to fly 50,000 miles in a calendar year and spend at least US\$6,000. Or, you can sign up for ConnectMiles, then credit your points for future United flights to the Copa program, and hit gold after just 45,000 miles. You automatically get the same standing in Star Alliance, which means priority

boarding, priority check-in and, perhaps best of all, free access to 1,000 lounges around the world, no matter which member carrier you fly. Avianca, the national carrier of Colombia and another Star Alliance partner, offers similar benefits.

Shoot for a status match. If you have elite status on one carrier and want to switch allegiance to another, you can try calling customer service and asking them to match your credentials (they may challenge you to fly with them for a few thousand miles to prove your loyalty). The website **StatusMatcher** can help guide you through the process.

Pause your points. Taking a break from travel? Consider freezing your frequent-flyer account. Flyers on Turkish Airlines, among others, can do just that by paying a US\$10 fee for every 1,000 miles. Once your account is reactivated, your miles are valid for another three years.

Rack Up the Rewards

These days, gaining ground doesn't always mean taking off.

Another year older? Then get rewarded

Gold-card holders in Royal Orchid Plus, the Thai Airways plan, can celebrate by saving 50% on standard mileage requirements. This annual offer, tied to birthdays but really available once at any point during the year, means you can get economy tickets for as few as 12,500 miles between Bangkok and Singapore, Hanoi or Saigon.

Accrue points simply by signing up

If you're a frequent passenger aboard Malaysia Airlines, then take advantage of its Enrich program. Signing up will net you your first 1,000 points without ever leaving the ground. After that, it's a more standard set of points: between 25% and 125% of mileage in economy, 125% to 175% when flying business, and up to 200% in first class.

Spend on the ground, take to the skies

Until the end of March, Garuda Indonesia is offering its frequent flyers a chance to win up to 100,000 miles. The winner will be the one who generates the most points conversion from Garuda's bank, telecommunications and shopping partners. The three-month long contest comes with a series of other awards as well.

If You're a **POINTS HOARDER**

Plenty of travelers are under the misconception that saving points—like saving money—is a wise idea. But there's a big downside to socking away miles: they lose value dramatically over time, thanks to constantly changing program rules. On February 2, for example, British Airways will increase the price of short-haul award tickets in the U.S. from 4,500 to 7,500 miles one-way. Voilà: your points just became worth 40 percent less. To dodge devaluation:

Rightsize your emergency fund. Unless you're saving up for something specific, hang on to only enough points for a reward you're likely to use in the next year. Book flights for that long-weekend trip or hotel room for the staycation you've been putting off, and relieve yourself of the anxiety that comes with having unused points in the bank.

Appraise your assets. Maybe you're reluctant to spend your points because you're concerned that you're not maximizing their value—that if you swap them for a weekend away, you'll miss out on a longer, more luxurious stay. "The key to understanding whether or not an award is a good value is to know what you would



be willing to pay out of pocket for the ticket," says Gary Leff, author of the popular frequent-flyer blog *View from the Wing*. "If you're getting several cents of value out of the miles that you spend, you've done well."

For example, if you find a ticket for 25,000 miles that would normally cost US\$700, that's the equivalent of 2.3 cents a mile—a pretty good deal. But if the seat would typically be US\$200, each mile is worth a skimpy 0.8 cents. (If you want to check the value of your stash, **The Points Guy** website issues monthly valuations for airline and hotel points.)

Get a bargain by spending big. The good news if you've been hoarding: the best values for award bookings tend to be on luxury products. A business-class ticket from San Francisco to London on American, for instance, costs 100,000 miles, while in cash it would be more than US\$6,000—you're getting about 6 cents a mile. Book far enough in advance, and you can jet from Singapore to San Francisco in one of Singapore Airlines' suites for around 70,000 miles. On the hotel front, a night at the Ritz-Carlton in Half Moon Bay, near San Francisco, runs US\$565, or 60,000 points.

My Big Points Win

Three experts share the greatest trips they've scored with rewards.

"I'm about to fly first class on the Airbus A380s of Emirates, Etihad and Qatar. I'll shower in the sky on board Emirates from Houston to Dubai and Bangkok—all courtesy of my Alaska Airlines miles. My flight to Doha is on Qatar, and I'll come home in Etihad's First Apartment, which is big enough to walk around in. Total cost: US\$500, 235,000 miles and 6,000 Starpoints."
— Gary Leff, of the *View from the Wing* blog

"For my husband's 40th birthday we took an around-the-world trip. We flew business class to Amsterdam, Singapore and the Maldives, where we stayed in a private villa. The trip would have cost tens of thousands of dollars. In total, our award tickets cost 240,000 United miles, plus around US\$200."
— Summer Hull, of the *Mommy Points* blog

"I recently redeemed 135,000 American miles to fly round-trip to Hong Kong in Cathay Pacific's first class—a trip that retails for US\$25,000. Cathay has fantastic service, great food (caviar and Krug, what more can you want?), and some of the most comfortable beds in the sky. I used points for a suite at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong, which costs around US\$1,000 per night."
— Ben Schlappig, of the *One Mile at a Time* blog

\$170,400,000

The amount, in U.S. dollars, that art collector Liu Yiqian paid for a Modigliani painting with his American Express card—in part so his family could fly for free, always.

A photograph of a modern dining area in a hotel suite. It features a round glass table with a large, ornate black and gold vase holding pink flowers in the center. Four leather-upholstered chairs with gold frames surround the table. In the background, there are decorative black sculptures and framed artwork on the wall.

GRAND | HYATT[®]
ERAWAN BANGKOK

DISCOVER A GRAND EXPERIENCE LIKE NEVER BEFORE

Immerse yourself in luxury and refinement at Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok's new premium suites; Erawan Suite and Diplomat Suite. Each spacious suite enjoys an artful blend of contemporary residential style and Thai elegance, with expansive city views, and is enhanced by seamless integration of technology for business or leisure.



Erawan Suite Bedroom



Erawan Suite Bathroom



Erawan Suite Living Room

For reservations, please call Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok on +66 2254 1234 or email bangkok.grand@hyatt.com. Visit us at bangkok.grand.hyatt.com

GRAND HYATT ERAWAN BANGKOK
494 Rajdamri Road, Bangkok 10330, Thailand
TELEPHONE +66 2254 1234 E-MAIL bangkok.grand@hyatt.com
bangkok.grand.hyatt.com
#grandhyatterawan

The trademark HYATT[®] and related marks are trademarks of Hyatt International Corporation. ©2014 Hyatt International Corporation. All rights reserved.

DEALS | T+L READER SPECIALS

From a cruise through Halong Bay to an extended stay at an all-inclusive, private Cambodian island, this month's offers are sure to win hearts.



Le Passage
Mohkan Shan
tea estate.

DINING

CHINA

Le Passage Mohkan Shan

A five-course seasonal French menu by acclaimed chef Toyo Koda at this French-style tea estate makes a trip to the mellow mountains of Zhejiang Province—200 kilometers from Shanghai—a worthy journey.

The Deal Third Anniversary Winter Special: a night in a Deluxe room, from RMB3,760 for two, through February 29.

Save up to 40%.

lepassagemoganshan.com.

BALI

The Laguna, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa

There's a feast for two waiting at this Nusa Dua resort, including daily buffet breakfast, one afternoon tea at Arwana and one buffet dinner at Banyubiru. Burn off those calories swimming in the sea or in the 5,000-square-meter interconnected lagoon pools that crisscross the hotel's landscaped gardens. **The Deal** A Sparkling Lunar New Year: two nights in a Deluxe Garden View room, from US\$340 for two; book by February 8. **Save 35%.** thelagunabali.com.

LANGKAWI

The Westin Langkawi Resort & Spa

Perks to keep you rejuvenated throughout the stay include a daily cocktail for two at Breeze, SuperFoodsRx welcome amenities, in-room breakfast, and non-alcoholic beverages for two at The Westin Airport Lounge. If you go even grander and splurge for a villa, you will be picked up and sent off to the airport in a lavish chauffeured car. **The Deal** Suites and villas promotion: a night in a one-bedroom suite, from RM1,315 for two, through December 20. **Save 30%.** westin.com.

CITY

BANGKOK

Amari Boulevard

The hotel's location in Nana means you're right in the heart

SUPER SAVER

Sheraton Bali Kuta, Bali

The free one-way airport transfer also gives you access to the Golden Bird Lounge at Ngurah Rai International Airport. SPG members get an extra 30-percent savings at any on-site restaurants. **The Deal** Relax & Enjoy: two nights in a Deluxe room, from US\$330 for two, through August 31. **Save 35%.** sheratonbalikuta.com.



of the city's CBD, surrounded by small shops, big malls, great dining options and wild nightlife nooks that have come to define the dynamism of Thailand's capital. **The Deal** Chinese New Year Exclusives: two nights in a Superior room, from Bt4,080 for two, February 1-29; book with code CNY2016AF. **Save 20%.** amari.com.

SINGAPORE

Village Hotel Albert Court and Village Hotel Bugis

With this offer, you can welcome the year of the monkey from the prewar shophouses in Little India or from a spacious modern room in the enclave of Arab Street. Whichever hotel you choose, your room will afford an expansive window into the multicultural heart and soul of this city-state. **The Deal** Chinese New Year promotion: a night in a Superior room, from RMB3,760 for two; book by February 29. **Save 30%.** stayfareast.com.

BEACH

CAMBODIA

Song Saa Private Island

Song saa means "the sweethearts" in Khmer, and this romantic getaway spans two small islands connected by a footbridge in the Gulf of Thailand, just a 35-minute boat ride away from Sihanoukville. Everything is included, from spa treatments to Khmer cooking classes to nutritious meals made of locally grown ingredients. All you have to do is loosen yourself up to the embrace of old-growth forests, tropical reefs and occasional rare hornbills stopping by your overwater terrace. **The Deal** Stay 5 Pay 4: five nights in a Jungle villa, from US\$5,888 for two, through April 30. **Save 25%.** songsaa.com.

BALI

St. Regis

The ultimate pampering in Nusa Dua starts with a

complimentary round-trip airport transfer that brings you to one of the best resorts in Indonesia, where proud butlers answer to your needs any time of day. You can take full advantage of the beachfront location without having to worry about checkout until 3 p.m. **The Deal** Stay 4 Pay 3: four nights in a Regis suite, from US\$1,260 for two, ongoing. **Save 25%.** stregisbali.com.

CULTURE

JAPAN

Kifu no Sato

Channel your samurai spirit as you set foot on the delicate tatami floors of this *ryokan*. Located in the birthplace of Japan's greatest swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi, in northeastern Okayama Prefecture, the inn is a great launch pad for your cultural exploration, from samurai martial arts to Japanese flower arranging (ikebana) and cooking, kimono dressing and 1,000-year-old Bizen pottery making. Your suite comes with traditional features like a private open-air *onsen* made of hinoki cypress as well as the modern comfort of a pillow menu. Another highlight is the kaiseki cuisine that incorporates seasonal local ingredients such as Chiya beef, lobster and blowfish. **The Deal**

Stay at Kifu no Sato: a night in a Leopard Lily suite, from ¥67,366 for two, through March 31; book with code RCKTL2016. **Save 20%.** ryokancollection.com.

INDONESIA

Nihiwatu

Blissfully isolated on Sumba Island, 400 kilometers west of Bali, your two-story villa features a private pool, an open-air living room and multiple bathrooms. Go in February or March and witness the Pasola, a tradition that involves villagers on horseback engaging in a bloody spear fight to herald good harvest. **The Deal** Green Season at Nihiwatu: three nights in a Kanatar Sumba House, from US\$1,950 all-inclusive for two, through March 20. **Save 38%.** nihiwatu.com.

VIETNAM

Essence Hanoi

This Hanoi-Halong combo package takes care of all transfers, including round-trip airport transport, and lets you admire the picturesque Halong Bay from the private balcony aboard your ship's Deluxe cabin. While in Hanoi, you can choose among a 30-minute foot or head-and-shoulder massage for two; two tickets for a water puppet show; or an

hour cyclo tour around the Old Quarter. Try a glass of the local wine; a bottle will be presented to you upon arrival. **The Deal** Luxury Retreat package: two nights in a Junior suite and two nights aboard Au Co Cruise, from US\$890 for two, ongoing. **Save up to 20%.** essencehanoihotel.com.

BANGKOK

Klapsons The River Residences

If a week isn't enough for you to explore Bangkok's *sois* and all its street food, take a month off, opt for one of the William Sawaya-designed riverside residences and make yourself at home. All 92 colorful serviced apartments here feature floor-to-ceiling windows that afford commanding views of the Chao Phraya River. Six lap pools mean you'll rarely swim into anybody, while being surrounded by long-standing local communities gives you an abundance of authentic dining options. Plus, you'll never have to worry about wrinkly clothes, thanks to the complimentary two-piece daily pressing service. **The Deal** Holiday promotion: a month in a Studio room, from Bt64,000 for two, through April 30. **Save 30%.** klapsons.com.

—MONSICHA HOONSUWAN



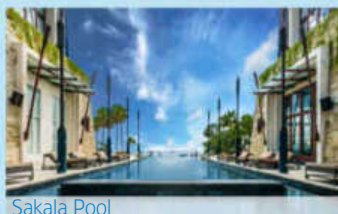
Song Saa's
Jungle villa.



Sakala Suite



Kids Pool



Sakala Pool



Beach Activities

Exciting Family Holiday

Experience luxurious accomodation, delicious delicacies and exciting water-sports activities at Mantra Sakala Resort & Beach Club. More special benefits for the whole family awaits you, this is the perfect choice to share an unforgettable family vacation.

To book call **(62) 361 775 216**
or email **reservation@mantrasakala.com**

mantra | sakala resort & beach club, bali

STAY SOCIAL



Mantra Sakala Resort & Beach Club



@mantrasakala

mantra

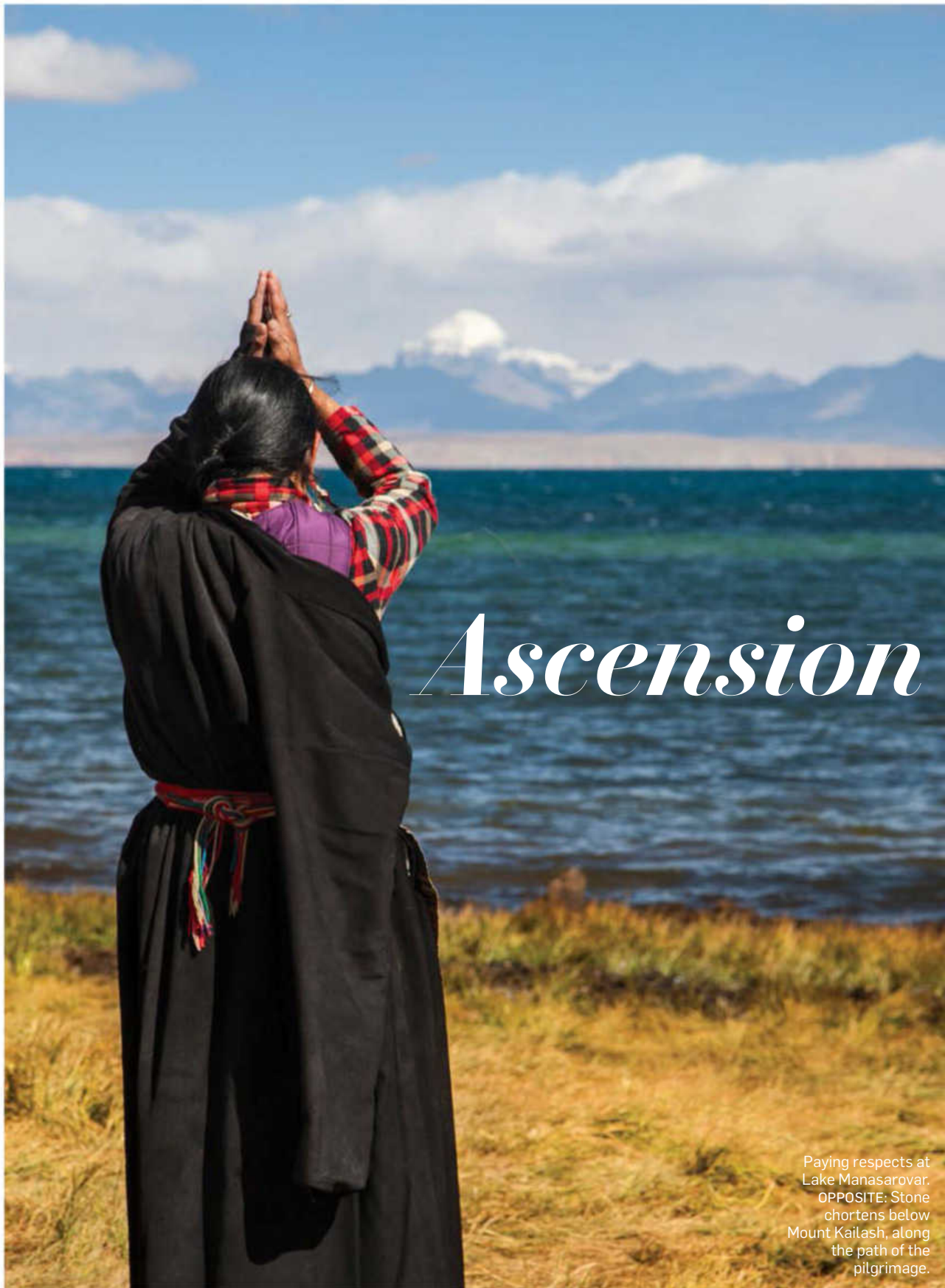
Jl. Pratama 95, Tanjung Benoa (Nusa Dua Peninsula) Bali 80363 Indonesia
T : (62) 361 775 216 F : (62) 361 775 168 E : info@mantrasakala.com
www.mantrasakala.com



Bank Bar
hides behind
a 7-Eleven in
Manila.

SONNY THAKUR

/ **FEBRUARY 2016** / Seeking salvation atop **Mt. Kailash** | A treasure map to **Manila's best new bars** | Edgy **Amsterdam** grabs the spotlight | **Palm Springs** heats up | Cruising the **Northwest Passage**



Paying respects at
Lake Manasarovar.
OPPOSITE: Stone
chortens below
Mount Kailash, along
the path of the
pilgrimage.



MOUNT KAILASH IS ASIA'S MOST SACRED PEAK. ON A
PERSONAL PILGRIMAGE IN WESTERN TIBET, **JOE CUMMINGS**
HEADS OVER THE HILLS WHERE THE SPIRITS FLY.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY **THOMAS KELLY**



I know we're supposed to stay at a teahouse near Zutrul Phuk Monastery tonight, but I don't know much longer it will take to arrive there, nor how far away the rest of my group and our guides are. Yet I'm thinking with dismay—far ahead. Anxious to reach the monastery before nightfall, I trudge on without stopping in what I hope is the right direction. Over glacial ridges and false summits, down treacherous gravel slopes, and through Mars-meets-Middle-Earth landscapes. I munch a chocolate bar while hiking. I'm hungry, but my louder internal grumble is a stream of self-admonishment for getting lost in the Trans-Himalayan Mountains, 5,000 meters up in the sky, with a bum knee and just a bit of candy. After seven hours alone, I come upon a pilgrim's tea tent, where a wrinkly Tibetan lady in traditional dress hands me a sealed bottle of drinking water. She refuses to accept my offered payment. I pray this little kindness foreshadows salvation ahead.

FROM EGYPT'S MOUNT SINAI, WHERE GOD

handed laws down to the Israelites, to Japan's Mount Fuji, the home of Shintoism's eternal youth goddess Sengen, certain peaks lend themselves to spiritual passage more than others.

In Asia, no mountain is more venerated than 6,638-meter Mount Kailash, an isolated peak in far western Tibet, part of the Trans-Himalayas, which run parallel to, and north of, the Himalayas. Four religions make it the mythological center of their theology. For Hindus, it's the home of Shiva and his wife Parvati, who enjoyed a 10,000-year sexual union here. Buddhists see the earthly reflection of Meru, a mountain that reaches underground to the lowest of hells and ascends to the highest heaven. Tibetan Buddhists call the mountain Kang Rinpoche, presided over by meditation deity Demchog and once the abode of famed guru-poet Milarepa. To followers of Bön, Tibet's animist, pre-



Tibetan pilgrims
with a prayer wheel
in Shigatse. LEFT: At
Shigatse Monastery.
BELOW RIGHT: The
long and winding
China National
Highway 219.



Buddhist faith, the mountain was the earthly arrival point of their primeval god Tonpa Shenrab. The Jains, meanwhile, believe this is the place Rishabha, the first of 24 founding *tirtankharas*, achieved enlightenment.

All that cosmic energy can be ascribed to the fact that the glacier-capped, four-sided peak forms a massive natural pyramid, almost as symmetrical as one of Egypt's Greats, a quadrangular Buddhist stupa, or a Hindu *shikara*—a shape people through the ages and around the world have been drawn to worship as a symbolic launch pad to heaven.

No other mountain of similar height stands alongside it. Records of religious pilgrimages to Kailash date back 1,700 years, when a journey on foot from India to the base of the mountain might take months. Over the centuries, thousands of devotees died of exposure, malnutrition or acute mountain sickness, often without having laid eyes on their holy goal.

Although it only takes three days to make the 52-kilometer circumambulation (many Tibetans do it all in one go), Kailash remains one of the most demanding pilgrimages in the world. Even in the relatively mild May-through-November open season, a hard weather front adds hypothermia to the list of risks. Luckily I don't have to walk from India; I'm arriving at the kora's starting point at Darchen from Lhasa by tour bus. Still, the high-altitude, seemingly endless-switchback, 1,400-kilometer drive, coupled with the unexpected last-minute hurdles in procuring permits to ascend the mountain ratcheted up the difficulty factor even before I set foot on it. Or subsequently got lost and began to wonder whether it was a stairway to hell rather than heaven. In all, it was a trip that offered equal parts of each in a true test of body and soul.

I'd been to Tibet once before, in 1989, but I only got as far as Lhasa, Shigatse and Sakya because permits were only available for the eastern part of the country. Nowadays it's much easier, and thousands of pilgrims and tourists make it to Mount Kailash every year.



Except, as it turned out, during the week my group met up in Lhasa.

All foreign visitors to Tibet who wish to leave Lhasa may do so only in the company of licensed agencies. Two weeks before I was scheduled to depart Bangkok, my agency delivered the news that it was impossible to secure travel permits for the two weeks I was going to be in Tibet. It was a security measure for the 50th anniversary of China's annexing the country. At a loose end, I contacted other China-based travel services about trekking Kailash and by luck hit upon one, Tibet Vista, that came through with travel permits for 13 people. Hence we were to become the only non-Chinese tourists in western Tibet during this stretch of time.

WITHIN HOURS OF LANDING IN LHASA, I FEEL lightheaded and short of breath. At 3,600 meters, the atmosphere here contains 68 percent of the oxygen as at sea level, and at the kora's highest point, nearly 6,000 meters, the oxygen will drop to 40 percent of normal intake. To prevent acute mountain sickness, most tour companies mandate you spend three days in Lhasa to acclimatize to the elevation.

As I discover while getting accustomed to the thin air, the modern Chinese infrastructure that surrounds the ancient capital is part façade, part functional—new buildings imitate Tibetan architecture, the taxi system actually works and the streets are clean—but for the most part it leaves Lhasa's cultural center intact.

That heart is the Barkhor, a honeycomb of narrow streets and alleys circumscribing a sizeable urban Tibetan market and the Jokhang, Tibet's holiest temple. Although dolled up for international consumption with the addition of a pedestrian plaza around the temple itself, the back streets are still lined with shops selling colorful fabrics to be cut and sewn into traditional outfits, and rustic butcheries fronted by thick slabs of fresh yak meat. Rough Tibetan cowboys stand in clusters, haggling over prices while fingering strands of precious beads carved of agate, coral and turquoise.

In a bus that becomes our second home over the next two weeks, we leave Lhasa and roll southwest through a patchwork of jagged rock hills, sand dunes, rivers, pastures and lakes, under a striking, blue sky. The road counts hundreds of extreme hairpin turns—and views of five glacier-encrusted peaks that, at more than 8,000 meters, are among the top 10 highest in the world.

From the one-street Tibetan town of Tingri, the bus climbs the steep road through the Rongbuk Valley to 5,200-meter northern Everest Base Camp, only four kilometers from the Nepal border. Along the way we can see the top of mighty Mount Everest playing hide and seek with passing clouds.

At base camp, we park next to a collection of semi-permanent tents woven from pure yak wool. Hand-forged iron stoves fueled by yak dung provide heat and cooking. Our Tibetan hiking guide, a Jackie Chan-look-alike named Lotse, leads us via an off-road shortcut through rocky chasms and gravelly slopes to the actual



Prayer flags at Dolma La pass, the highest point on kora. BELOW: Sheep and yaks graze along the shore of Lake Manasarovar.



staging point for Everest climbers. At lower elevations, the route would be only moderately challenging. But here, the four kilometers feel like 10.

The surrounding Himalayan beauties, the occasional rustic chorten, and profound silence divert attention away from my overtaxed lungs. I spot a small herd of wild Tibetan antelope, an animal threatened with extinction by hunters who sell its gossamer-thin undercoat to *shahtoosh* weavers in Pakistan and India.

At trail's end, we climb a low bluff topped by a stone temple streaming with prayer flags. Ahead in the distance, beyond a vale of lesser peaks, stands Earth's tallest extrusion, the mountain that British surveyors named for Sir George Everest and which has been known much longer among Tibetans as Qomolangma (Holy Mother). We manage a 15-minute audience before passing clouds obscure the view.

On the way down to continue our journey to Kailash, we stop off at Rongbuk Monastery, founded in 1902 on a spot hermits and monks have favored for meditation for at least four centuries. Clinging to the side of a mountain at 5,000 meters, the remote refuge for around 50 monks and nuns is the highest monastery in the world.

That night we sleep at Saga, a military garrison town with the last hot-water shower we'll see for a week. The next day our bus rambles on. Towns become villages, and villages give way to nomadic tent camps for Tibetan herders. Long stretches of windswept, arid terrain show no sign of human or animal life at all, other than the occasional Chinese police checkpoint sitting in the middle of nowhere.

WE'RE RIDING CHINA NATIONAL HIGHWAY 219,

one of the planet's highest motorways and one that climbs over five mountains taller than 5,000 meters and passes 44 glaciers. Only in 2013 was the road completely paved in its entirety.

An oversized gateway looming over no man's land marks the way to Lake Manasarovar. Just as every Indian





temple is paired with a water tank for ritual ablutions, at the southern foot of Kailash sits this, one of the highest freshwater lakes on Earth. At 4,590 meters, it's as much an object of veneration and pilgrimage as Mount Kailash.

Hindus see the lake as an outward manifestation of the mind of Brahma, the creator god. For Buddhists, it is Anavatapta, a calming, karma-curative lake at the center of the cosmos. For the rest of us, it's a marvelous vision of shimmering sapphire blue rimmed by scintillating, multi-colored sand and grassy marshes visited by water-birds one would never expect to see at this altitude. Then you remember that within a 30-kilometer radius one finds the sources of four mighty rivers, all of them sacred on the Indian subcontinent: Indus, Sutlej, Brahmaputra and Karnali


Darchen is our last overnight stop before the kora. Over yak curry in a Tibetan teahouse, Lotse explains that we need to pack everything we won't need on the trail into bags to be carried by yaks that will follow behind us. Any supplies we need while on that day's trek we must carry ourselves.

After reading a light daypack with nuts, chocolate bars, sunscreen, blister gels and a water bottle, I climb under thick Chinese quilts in the unheated room I share with a German trekker. I'm both excited and apprehensive about the next three days. I hope the weather holds, and that I'll be able to handle walking 52 kilometers at elevations between 5,000 and 6,000 meters.

Day one begins well, as we start up the kora path across the sandy Barkha plain with views of high peaks in Nepal and India to the south and southwest. The weather is sunny and crisp, and soon the path is winding along the Lha Chu valley past meadows shorn short by grazing yaks. Around four kilometers in, the trail climbs a ridge for an inspiring first view of Kailash's southern flank. As the valley opens below we come to Tarboche, a lofty prayer-flag pole first erected in 1681 and still renovated annually.

We settle into walking rhythms that serendipitously divide our group into clusters of two or three. I find





Tibetan temple armor, dedicated to the service of guardian dieties.
LEFT: A Buddhist pilgrim near Zutrul Phuk Monastery.

I FEEL TIRED
AND EXUBERANT
AT THE SAME
TIME. I COULD
LIE DOWN FOR
A NAP. OR I
COULD BOOGIE
ON THE ROCKS

myself walking alongside Sonja, from Utrecht, on the first day because our respective paces are similar.

Chuku Monastery, founded in the 13th century, appears high to the west of the trail. Its rock walls exude intrigue. A little further on, a long, thin waterfall cascades from a soaring rock cliff, probably originating from glacier melt. At this point my left knee decides it's had enough hiking for the day and begins to throb. Unfortunately, we have four hours left.

After an 11-kilometer day, we reach Dirapuk Monastery and a primitive guesthouse where we spend the night. On a hillside, both afford views across the river to the dark, glacier-streaked north face of Mount Kailash.

As Lotse and the yak driver prepare noodles for our evening meal, I compare notes on the day's hike with my fellow trekkers. Spirits are high, but everyone knows the next day's 22-kilometer trek up and over the highest point on the kora will be the real test. I fall asleep hoping that the good weather will last, and that my knee won't get any worse. Hunter S. Thompson comes to mind: "Buy the ticket, take the ride."

At 6 a.m., after a breakfast of boiled eggs and Tibetan flatbread, we set off on day two in total darkness. I realize I've forgotten my flashlight. Gilles, a sporty 33-year-old from Switzerland, is wearing a strong LED headlamp, and kindly offers to hike alongside me until the sun comes up so that I don't lose the trail.

Almost immediately, the stony trail begins its steep ascent towards Dolma La pass. We zigzag among rocks and boulders that seem to increase in size the higher we climb. By 8 a.m. the sun is up, and we're nearing the top of the pass. Luckily the pain in my knee subsided overnight, but the exertion at this altitude is so intense that I have to stop to catch my breath every 10 or 20 meters. I tell Gilles, who is accustomed to Alpine heights, to go on ahead now that there's daylight.

IN THE DEMCHOG TANTRA, KAILASH MANIFESTS

the Mandala of Highest Bliss, but at this point it feels more like the Mandala of Deepest Pain. On cue, I come upon Shiva-tsal, a 5,330-meter rock mass where true pilgrims suffer symbolic death as they enter the realm of Yama, Lord of the Dead. Here pilgrims leave a lock of hair, a drop of blood, a piece of jewelry or other vestige of their everyday lives to represent leaving this life behind. I spot packs of Chinese cigarettes and discarded clothing among the karmic debris, to which I add a Dunlop Big Stubby guitar pick.

A stiff wind is whipping down the mountain into my face and, just to drive the point home, it begins to snow. It comes down in tiny dense balls that bounce off my parka and off the rock face under my boots. The snow is so icy it refuses to stick to anything. Maybe it's hail; I'm not sure.

Twice I think I've made the top of the pass, only to realize it's a false summit. After another hour of labored climbing, I'm finally standing at the top of Dolma La pass, where the goddess Tara (Dolma in Tibetan) opens her merciful arms and the snow stops whirling around me. I feel tired and exuberant at the same time. I could lie

down for a nap, or I could boogie on the rocks. In Hindu-Buddhist terms, I've been reborn in the same life with a clean karmic bill.

AS I STAGGER OVER THE 5,636-METER GLACIAL

ridge forming the pass, I'm tempted to take a break. But the 600-meter ascent was enough to induce acute mountain sickness if I stick around. What's more, I can see no one else ahead of me, nor anyone else behind me, on the trail. I have to keep moving.

Gauri Kund, a round glacier lake in its own bowl-like valley, glitters like an emerald mirage below. Meanwhile I have to make a precipitous 400-meter descent to the valley floor while staying vertical on the slippery, and at times treacherous, rock-and-gravel inclines. At several points, the trail splits into labyrinths of narrow footpaths through scrub and stones the size of baseballs. When this happens, I stop to survey the geography, then pick what appears to be the most direct line between me and the valley ahead. It's all very scientific.

I stumble down this side of the pass, and enter the Akshobhya Valley, alone. Now and then a small group of Tibetan pilgrims pass me in either direction, smiling and intoning "*tashi delek*," the all-purpose Tibetan greeting and farewell. Even little grannies in sandals negotiate the rough trails faster than I do. This turns out to be a blessing as it's a granny who offers me the water that powers me through, and helps me see that though I may have lost my group, I am not alone.

The further I get from the pass, the more welcoming Akshobhya Valley becomes. Vast herds of yak nibble on lichen fields alongside the river. A large raven flies parallel to my route for a while. The valley is so quiet that I can hear the raven's wings rustle like silk as it soars overhead. Later I read that Tibetans believe the bird to be a manifestation of Mahakala, "Great Black One," a protector deity in Vajrayana Buddhism. On Everest, they've been seen at altitudes as high as 6,350 meters. Looking down at me as it flies past, the raven seems so at home in this beautifully bleak environment. I feel like a lonely spaceman on an alien planet.

After nine and a half hours, I spot a small monastery clinging to a slope. One hundred meters below the monastery stands a cluster of stone and mud-brick buildings. I detour from the trail to investigate, and almost immediately run into Don. He's the first member of our group I've seen since early morning, and I'm overjoyed to learn that this is the end of today's long trek.

Gilles and Dan are also there, having reached Zutrul Phuk an hour earlier. We all share a room at the teahouse, where I remove my boots, lie down on one of the bunks, and doze off straight away.

The slower members of the group straggle in after 11 or 12 hours on the trail. A couple who had trouble negotiating the ascent to Dolma La pass spends nearly 14 hours reaching the teahouse. They're suffering from the altitude, and make frequent use of emergency oxygen canisters. In the evening, all 13 of us join together for hot noodles in the cozy teahouse, quietly celebrating the fact





In the shadow of Mount Kailash, ponies trek the kora.

that everyone made it through the most difficult day. It turned out we were all just going at our own pace, and none of us was truly lost.

The best part of day three's 11-kilometer hike is a gentle climb through a cobalt- and rust-streaked canyon high above the river. Another hour through comparatively tame countryside, and we're back in Darchen. My fellow trekkers and I toast the completion of the kora over a Nepali curry dinner in a Tibetan restaurant. To help prevent altitude sickness, I haven't had a drink in nearly 20 days, but tonight I'm delighted to pop a tall bottle of Lhasa beer.

That evening, while shopping for beads and souvenirs on the streets of Darchen, Dan, Don and I come across a shopfront with the sign HOLY WATER HOT SHOWER. An enterprising Chinese migrant has set up private booths. The water, while hot enough to elicit moans of pleasure from three guys who haven't showered in five days, probably isn't holy. But at this sacred intersection of four religions, I'm finding my ablutions divine. +



THE DETAILS

GETTING THERE

Lhasa can be reached via daily nonstop flights from Chengdu and Kunming on China Eastern (flychinaeastern.com). Both China Eastern and Thai Airways (thaiairways.com) fly between Bangkok and Kunming daily.

All international tourists to China require a visa, which must be obtained in advance from an embassy or consulate of the People's Republic of China.

In addition, all visitors to the Tibetan Autonomous Region must show a Tibet Travel Permit before being allowed to board any flight bound for Lhasa. The permit will be checked again on arrival in

Lhasa, and at numerous Chinese highway checkpoints throughout Tibet. These permits are available only through China-based travel agencies licensed for this purpose.

A separate Alien Travel Permit endorsed for travel in the Kailash region is also needed for visitors intending to do the kora.

All visitors traveling outside of Lhasa, including Chinese citizens, must be accompanied by a licensed tour guide.

Tibet Vista Travel (tibettravel.org), an agency based in Chengdu, is adept at arranging Tibet Travel Permits, Kailash permits and trekking packages. Contact them online or in person in Chengdu.

Obstacles to ABV include burgers, a phone booth and an elevator shaft.

Behind Closed Doors

MANILA'S COOL CROWD IS CLIMBING DOWN FROM THE CLUB TABLES AND TUCKING INTO QUIET CORNERS. **STEPHANIE ZUBIRI** EXPLAINS WHY THE TRENDSETTERS ARE SNEAKING SIPS SECRETED AWAY, AND ACTS AS OUR GPS TO THE CITY'S NEW NIGHT-OWL NIRVANA. **PHOTOGRAPHED BY SONNY THAKUR**



"What do you mean, 'Meet me in the 7-Eleven storeroom'?"

Sometimes I think my conversations on where to rendezvous with my friends in Manila are so down-the-rabbit-hole surreal as to be farcical. These days, you can't plan a night out without making sure everyone has detailed directions, the odd secret passcode and the blueprint plans to the bowels of buildings—plus a strong sense of irony coupled with the inclination to lose all notions of time and place. Where the coolest scene once surrounded anyone who snagged the spotlight tables at the see-and-be-seen clubs, now it's about having the confidence to squirrel away and drink in the dark, opting for quality over quantity in terms of both company and cocktail intake.

Manila is mushrooming into unassuming black holes, meant to be places of refuge, where an "oldie" like me can avoid all the blingy, glamour-crazed, EDM-pumped millennials in the large clubs and trendy lounges. Hidden behind greasy spoons and old wooden cabinets, on the rise are nooks where you can have a proper drink accompanied by a real conversation. Where you can be civilized

and act your age as opposed to dancing on a ledge while showing the world your underpants. That's not to say no one indulges in getting blissfully blotto. I vaguely recall, for instance, tumbling out of the sliding metal-grill door of an antique elevator-to-nowhere one predawn, as if a reverse vortex had spat me out from the shadowy, vintage comfort of the doubly concealed speakeasy pictured here, leaving me dazed and confused at the contrast with the vulgarly neon-lit sidewalk on which I had been deposited.

That was my last hurrah, as it happened, before I got pregnant. Having been making the social rounds recently while sober, though, I've had more clarity to assess what's going on after hours in the Philippine capital, to analyze the anthropological and architectural elements that have driven this city out of the light and to the clandestine. As the smart set matures and relaxes into its skin, they're seeking out diversions that are actually enjoyable rather than simply enviable. Steady, comfortable and refined, the new Manila thrives in hidden alleyways, blossoms in the shadows. Here's a roadmap and a flashlight; go explore the dark.



BANK BAR

The Convenience Store Cache

Your uninitiated friends are going to get lost and then they'll get incredulous en route to meeting you for a drink at Bank Bar, which is nestled deep—and I mean deep—inside a corporate tower. To up the already sky-high exclusivity level, the owners have contrived to make you sneak into 7-Eleven storage room in which a hidden entrance opens up into a cavernous space that looks like a posh industrial warehouse vault with velvety armchairs and touches of granite, serving delicious bar bites and the most inclusive list of alcohol in the metro. Built on a vast network of single shareowners who pay for extra perks, the A-list clientele ranges from bankers (naturally) to society mavens and celebrities to good-looking expats who have managed to divine their way to the door and past the doorman. A quieter crowd

looking for an after work wind-down paired with the tastiest truffle french fries in town starts trickling in from 6 p.m. When a friendly mixologist makes his way to your table with a tinkling martini cart filled with the finest gins and vodkas from around the world, making almost indecent proposals to whip you up whatever you want right here and now, you know you're in for a night of high-class indulgence. The vibe picks up around 11 p.m. with upbeat early-2000s house music and people swishing their cocktails and clinking Krug glasses as they hop from table to table. It's a crowd of regulars, like Cheers—if draft beer were small-batch sake and Norm and Cliff were the beautiful people. *GF RCBC Savings Bank Corporate Center, 25th & 26th St., Bonifacio Global City, Metro Manila; 63-2/544-5776; reservations recommended, the smarter your attire the better; drinks for two P1,000.*

ABV

Dial-a-Drink

An old-school speakeasy with the old-school touches to match, ABV is hidden behind a not-so-secret door in a fake phone booth that leads to a vintage elevator cage in the owners' neon-lit, diner-style, burgers-and-hotdogs joint. Cozy banquettes, aged brick walls, flickering candlelight and rocking cocktails: the place is for me the ultimate vortex. Oddly funnel-shaped, with no windows to help ground you in time or location, it's a seemingly civilized atmosphere lubricated by deliciously

potent drinks that abduct you for a few hours. It's easy to go with the flow when partner Lee Watson is on hand for a hello hug and you're sure someone you know is going to sweep through the curtains any minute. An entertaining observation I've made sober was that people are so blissfully unaware of their Stockholm syndrome, like willing prisoners of the whiskey sours and Moscow mules expertly crafted by ABV's Diageo World Class mixologist Ken Bandivas, that many don't realize their state until they get up and their knees buckle. Yes, the





name stands for “alcohol by volume,” and a lot of it would clearly show in a blood test after a few hours in this place. Which makes me wonder if the cheeseburgers are there to hide the ABV for more than one reason.
BF 22 Jupiter St., Makati, Metro Manila; abv.ph; drinks for two P700.

THE RIEDEL ROOM AT ELBERT'S STEAK ROOM

The Mad Men Mirage

The Riedel Room at Elbert's Steak Room is the base camp for the refugees of the recently closed long-time iconic whiskey establishment Kipling's—young-in-years but old-soul guys and few sophisticate gals who were drinking single malts before it was “a thing.” And while you may be aware that the days of

plain old Black/soda are gone, replaced by the Strathisla, Bruichladdich, Yamazaki and a whole bunch of other exotic names you wind up slurring at the barman by the end of the night, do you have the chops to dive headfirst into the hardcore, enlightened drinking crowd at this decidedly masculine establishment? A very early-60s dapper-don atmosphere tucked away in the second floor of a dingy office building with no elevator, the ambience is intimate with the clients manning the music with their personal iPods. Coming here could go one of two ways: you could feel like you're awkwardly gate crashing a private party, or you could be welcomed with open arms and make lifelong friends. How the evening swings is up to



Channel your inner Don Draper in Riedel Room. **CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW:** Riedel Room's stogie stash; table hop in Bank Bar; fried chicken skin snacks at Bank Bar; ABV mixes up greatness.



you and how much charisma you gain with each glass of whiskey. *2F Sagittarius III Bldg., 111 H. V. de la Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati, Metro Manila; 63-2/519-8665; steakroom.com; drinks for two P500.*

MANDALAY WHISKY & CIGARS *Narnia*

At the end of a somberly lit sparse hallway behind a casual sport pub, a large wooden wardrobe stands ceremoniously—the C. S. Lewis-inspired time-machine entrance into the colonial East Indies. Mandalay, with its large green palms, rich woodwork and those iconic giant Chinese foo

dogs standing guard over the bar, is one of the most beautiful and aesthetically interesting establishments in the city, conceived and decorated as it is by local set designer and director Luis Tabuena. The Asian-colonial-era interiors are reminiscent of the time when people had nothing better to do after sunset than drink the night away, with stuff simpler and stronger than any pretty pink cocktail, which you certainly won't find on the menu. It's an old-world backdrop for a vibrant crowd that—discerning whiskyphiles though most of them are—feels far from stuffy, mirroring the personalities of the owners, a group that



includes local football stars and young entrepreneurs. With a very large, winding bar counter, as well as lots of little enclaves and cozy corners, you can come with the intent of showing off your new beau or hiding your secret lover. *100 C. Palanca St., Legazpi Village, Makati, Metro Manila; 63-2/834-5292; drinks for two P700.*

LIT *Shopping Mall Secret*

Do go into the light... on a guided path towards enlightenment based on your heart's deepest desires and the needs of your soul. I know it sounds wacky, but an evening at Lit is almost a spiritual experience, with bartender and whisky expert Francis Tosei adhering to the Japanese principles of *omotenashi*, or, as he describes it, trying to tune in to the same frequency as the customers and really putting himself in their

shoes in order to prescribe them the perfect malt for their mood. The man has recommendations for all occasions, from what to drink when you're heartbroken (Hibiki Japanese Harmony or Nikka 12, the latter of which, he has said, "gives you a tender mental massage") to what to serve your future mother-in-law (Ichiro's Malt Chichibu Port Pipe—feminine color and a hint of umami). In this tiny, quiet place with almost temple-like interiors completed by minimalist yet warm décor and strategic lighting, reverence and esoteric conversation reign. Leave all your frivolities at the door, please. That is, if you can find the door, hidden next to a bookshop among a slew of standard shopping mall storefronts. *GF Serendra, Bonifacio Global City, Metro Manila; 63-917/510-0014; fb.com/litmanila; drinks for two P1,000.*





A hand-carved ice sphere at Lit.
CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The chill Bonbon Club feels like your friend's terrace; whisky whisperer Francis Tosei reads minds at Lit; foo dogs guard the old world at Mandalay Whisky & Cigars.

THE BONBON CLUB

The Gin Joint

The capital's one and only bar dedicated entirely to gin turns out to be a welcome reprieve from all the upscale fancy-pants places; it's got an industrial hipster vibe that feels more like you're on someone's terrace than in a cocktail bar. Board games, low seating and a record player where you can pick your beats from stacks of vintage vinyl...

The Bonbon Club is a great neighborhood spot to have a relaxed moment with friends or chat up the bearded hipsters next to you. Unfortunately, I discovered this joint—in the heart of the Makati CBD, on one of these oft ignored side streets that hold mostly back entrances and parking garages—while in my pregnant state and so was only allowed to drink a really rocking fresh lemonade soda. But by the looks on everyone else's faces and the increasing volume of their laughter ricocheting off the walls, I could tell that their cocktails were damn potent. My husband was drinking round after round of their signature, deceptively deadly Dr. Sylvius, made with tangy citrus, fragrant

lemongrass and spicy ginger, like it was some sort of soft drink. It was the only time during my pregnancy that I felt I was really missing out on the alcohol, the one night I definitely wanted to be sipping on gin in my juice. 16 Tropical Palms, Gallardo St., Legazpi Village, Makati, Metro Manila; 63-2/801-4840; thebonbonclub.co; drinks for two P700. +

THE PALACE

The Big, the Bold, the Flashy and the Splashy

On the absolute opposite end of the spectrum from this set of subtle speakeasies is the hypercharged massive clubbing complex The Palace. At full capacity, it can hold up to 7,000 party people—impressively way more than the total population of most Kiwi towns. The complex is currently made up of four venues: expansive nightclub **Valkyrie**, where international DJ's come to bring the house down and VIPs toast champagne glasses in the balconies above; the day-to-night **The Pool Club**, where the young and gorgeous have a space to flaunt their impeccable bodies while nibbling on bites from **Café Naya**; and the most recently opened lounge **Revel**—more exclusive and plush, with an *Austin Powers* feel. For most people in the metro, no matter how much you try to escape the crazed club scene by hiding away in some nondescript bar, after 2 a.m., all roads lead to The Palace to party like kings and queens. thepalacemanila.com.



The newly renovated A'dam Tower, a boutique hotel, restaurant and more, which will open in Amsterdam-Noord this spring. OPPOSITE: Hotel de Goudfazant.



The background of the page is a photograph of a wine cellar. Wooden racks filled with wine bottles are visible, with a rustic wooden ladder leaning against them on the left. In the lower right foreground, a vintage teal scooter is parked. The scooter has a black seat, a rear fender, and a kickstand. The floor is made of dark wood.

THE LEADING EDGE

Once considered industrial no-man's-lands, Amsterdam's outskirts to the north and east have begun to hum with creative energy and, as **GISELA WILLIAMS** discovers, shift the center of the city itself.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **FELIX ODELL**

I WAS STANDING ON THE TENTH FLOOR OF THE FORMER

Shell Tower in Amsterdam-Noord with Sander Groet, a boyish-looking 46-year-old dressed in a faded T-shirt and jeans, a construction helmet placed jauntily on his head. The view overlooked all of Amsterdam; below, the IJ River flowed past, sun glinting off the surface of the water in the late summer light. The legendary canals and historic architecture, with its red gabled roofs and steeples piercing the sky, looked quaint in miniature. “I was born about twenty kilometers outside the city and I could see the tower from my window and think, ‘There is Amsterdam,’” Groet said. Now, he is part of a team of four

BELOW: Bak restaurant. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: The coworking space at Volkshotel; the outdoor setup at Vuurtoren-eiland.



entrepreneurs responsible for transforming this iconic 22-story building—which was once home to Royal Dutch Shell but was abandoned in 2009 after the financial crisis—into a cultural attraction for the whole city: a 24-hour music-themed hub with an affordable boutique hotel, a rotating restaurant, offices and a subterranean nightclub. By the spring of next year, it will be rechristened as the A’dam Tower.

Amsterdam-Noord—roughly a third the size of Amsterdam, and just 300 meters and a five-minute ferry ride from the central train station—was once, somewhat unbelievably, not really considered part of the city. Originally home to docklands and industrial sites, the area began to suffer after the shipping industry gradually deserted the neighborhood in the mid-80s, leaving it to rot and rust, like the set of a dystopian thriller. A decade ago, its gritty landscape and raw architecture resembled today’s central Detroit.

What makes the appeal of Noord different from the outskirts of other cities is the relatively small size of Amsterdam itself. Its historic center—the 17th-century canal ring, a UNESCO World Heritage site—is about half the size of New York’s Central Park. That means its fringes, and the quirky experimental restaurants and projects happening within these districts, are far more accessible for travelers, even those based in the city center, especially if you get around by bicycle, as all the locals do.

Which explains why I was facing south on a hard-hat tour with Groet. For visionaries like him, Amsterdam proper—with its coffee shops, tulip stalls and legendary red-light district—has become too crowded, overrun by tourists and the wealthy. And just like New York’s SoHo or the Marais in Paris, the city’s main thoroughfares more closely resemble luxury shopping malls than unique neighborhoods. In the past few years, major streets have become so packed that, in the high season, they are impossible to penetrate. The line for the Anne Frank House often wraps around two or sometimes three blocks. Against the picturesque backdrop of Prinsengracht, with houseboats bobbing in the water, there is a palpable sense of bike rage.

Many of Amsterdam’s tastemakers have made a new life for themselves working on the city’s edges, moving not only to Noord—though that’s by far the most notable shift—but to Oost (the East), too. Pushed out from the center, these new hotels, studios, shops, restaurants and cafés have helped the city maintain a sense of individuality that was becoming harder and harder to see.





Brimming with eccentric creativity and artistic spirit, they also offer an optimistic glimpse of the city's future.

BEFORE THERE WAS A'DAM, THERE WAS EYE, A JAW-

dropping feat of design by Austrian architectural firm Delugan Meissl. The building, a white, UFO-like structure on the river's edge, appears to hover over the water as if it has just descended from outer space. The Eye Film Institute's presence in Amsterdam-Noord was a major tipping point for the neighborhood—the museum chose to relocate from its original headquarters in Vondelpark, opening this new space in 2012. It was a smart move. Imagine if the Whitney had chosen to build its new Renzo Piano–designed museum in gritty, on-the-verge Red Hook, Brooklyn, instead of downtown Manhattan. Almost all day, every day, Eye's café is packed with both locals and visitors who have come to enjoy the views from what has now been dubbed Nieuw Amsterdam.

Among the other pioneers is the restaurateur Niels Wouters. One Tuesday evening, I followed him into the dining room of his nearly 10-year-old restaurant, Hotel de Goudfazant. It was buzzing with a lively crowd. When he first opened it, in an old hangar about a quarter the size of a football field on the waterfront, he told me, he had no idea how fast Amsterdam-Noord would develop. He just loved the big space, and the rent was next to nothing—plus, he relished the challenge of being off the grid. Almost everything inside the building was repurposed: piles of old bricks were made into a low partition in the open kitchen and a yellow vinyl floor was ripped out, sawed into tiles, and used to create a mosaic on one of the walls. The dramatic centerpiece in the space, a massive Carlo Scarpa glass chandelier, was the only object of market value, and even that was borrowed from a friend, a gallery owner



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Small bites served aboard *Yveer XIII*, a 1927 ferryboat; the Eye Film Institute. OPPOSITE: Lonneke Gordijn at Studio Drift.

who couldn't find a room big enough to hang it in. "We had no money but we find it good fun to do things really, really cheap," Wouters said. "Even if we had money we'd still do everything ourselves."

In 2012, Wouters opened another restaurant, smaller but more ambitious, called Café Modern. The menu is a Dutch spin on French bistro fare, offering unfussy dishes like oysters with cucumber, and cockles with croutons. The restaurant is set in an old bank building with a mirrored back wall, recycled industrial lights, and an open kitchen. It's just a five-minute bike ride from Eye and around the corner from Van der Pekstraat, a small avenue lined with shops and three-story brick housing projects, currently being gentrified with indie bookstores and boutiques. "It's changing now," said Wouters, "but it's happening slowly and organically. Of course, I'm part of that change, but I hope it remains a mixed neighborhood."

Bicycle beyond the waterfront and Amsterdam-Noord gets weirder and more difficult to navigate. Go left or right off Van der Pekstraat and you'll pass former harbor captain's houses, parks, canal locks, shiny new office buildings, and shoddy little warehouses and garages. Many artists and designers have taken advantage of the affordable rent, colonizing these industrial buildings—though it can be difficult to tell what's an old storage building and what's a studio.

One day, I followed Lilian Tilmans, the happy-go-lucky 57-year-old founder of Amsterdam Personalized, who occasionally leads custom tours of the city that focus on Amsterdam's young designers and innovators. She took me to meet Ralph Nauta of the design duo Studio Drift. A



It's impossible to walk into a bar not owned by the 'Three Wise Men from the East'



FROM ABOVE: Riad Farhat, owner of Maxwell Café; fresh tomato with sheep's-milk cheese being prepared by the chef at Vuurtoren-eiland.

tall and handsome 37-year-old with a head of dark, unruly hair, Nauta explained that he and his partner, Lonneke Gordijn, aspire to create objects that combine their passion for nature with futuristic technology. "I am obsessed with *Star Trek* and science fiction," said Nauta, "and Lonneke is more organic and interested in pure nature." I was drawn to their delicate but space-age-like light fixtures constructed from bronze sculptural shapes and electrical circuits, with harvested dandelion seeds that have been carefully glued on. Another of their designs, called *Shylight*, is a chandelier made out of layers

of silk fabric that resembles a floating jellyfish; it was recently installed in the Rijksmuseum.

Nauta told me that what really drives him to design is his desire to solve some of the world's big problems. He is unapologetic about his childlike idealism. "What I have learned is that everything is possible," he said. "If I go to a producer and they can't do what I want them to do, I know I'm on the right track. I find the research process essential. It's what sparks other ideas." He is currently working with a chemist to extract materials from chemical waste with zero emissions. Out of the leftovers they have invented a kind of synthetic obsidian, deep black like hardened lava. He pointed to a black, reflective oval sculpture that they call their *Obsidian Mirror*. "We want to create beautiful objects that are about solving big issues."

Environmental sustainability and alternative practices of urban development are also what inspire the architect Wouter Valkenier of Studio Valkenier. I met him at De Ceuveld, a café and multiuse hangout space hidden away in the middle of a group of small industrial garages by a once-polluted canal. It was there that I saw for the first time rescued houseboats, freshly painted in shades of gray and white, raised on platforms and connected by a winding boardwalk that was semi-obscured by clusters of plants—wild grasses, flowering weeds and young poplars (all soil-cleaning, naturally). Peering through a large window of one, I spied a bearded blond man laughing convivially with two women, the glow of Apple desktop computers illuminating their faces. It was the grooviest office ever. Almost all of the most interesting projects here are designed to make something new and utopian from the old. >>





THE LAGUNA
RESORT & SPA
NUSA DUA, BALI

THE
LUXURY
COLLECTION



THE LAGUNA, A LUXURY COLLECTION RESORT & SPA

Nestled on Bali's finest beach overlooking the majestic Indian Ocean, The Laguna Bali features 287 guest rooms, suites and villas complemented by 24-hour Butler Service, complimentary Wi-Fi, 5,000sqm of swimmable lagoon, enticing direct Lagoon Access rooms, 3 exquisite dining venues, a stunning state of the art Lagoon Spa and a Fitness Center.

EXPLORE THE DESTINATION AT THELAGUNABALI.COM



KAWASAN PARIWISATA NUSA DUA LOT N2
PO BOX 77, BALI 80363, INDONESIA
T. +62 361 771327

THELAGUNABALI.COM

“The city is starting to understand how important these underground, bottom-up types of projects are,” Valkenier told me. We were sitting inside De Ceuvel drinking homemade lemonade and eating salads made from ingredients sourced from the kitchen’s own gardens. Valkenier was currently working on a major project in Sloterdijk, in the northwestern corner of the city, near the harbor. He says that area will be the next Wild West for the creative crowd.

Until then, another focal point of the city’s energy is Amsterdam-Oost. The district includes Dapperbuurt (home to the popular Dappermarkt, an outdoor market selling cheap and exotic items from underwear to spices) and Indische Buurt, a neighborhood that was built at the turn of the 19th century to house working-class families. Many of the streets—Javastraat, Sumatrastraat, Borneostraat—are named after former Dutch colonies. Now much of the area is populated by young students and families who hail from Turkey, Morocco and Suriname. They hang out at Maxwell Café, an all-day coffeehouse kind of place in the Oosterpark neighborhood.

It’s thanks to the café’s owner, a young restaurateur of Moroccan descent named Riad Farhat, that the area has generated so much buzz. A feisty sommelier named Mees List who lives nearby told me it’s almost impossible to walk into a local bar that isn’t owned by Farhat and his two partners, who have adopted the collective moniker Three Wise Men from the East.

The trio’s most dramatic project is located on the backside of a large parking garage on the Singelgracht. Not long ago it was a dark, unwelcoming corner where drug addicts shot up. Farhat reinvented it as a bar and restaurant called Waterkant that has outdoor seating, an

indoor café with cheerfully clashing Caribbean colors, and a menu that celebrates Surinamese cuisine. He told me they sell thousands of bottles of Parbo, a popular Surinamese beer, a day.

NOTHING IS FARTHER FROM THE CENTER THAN

Vuurtoreneiland, a lonely little windswept isle about an hour from the canal ring. Officially part of Amsterdam-Noord, this ship-size fragment of land feels like a remote, floating wilderness. Now it serves as a dramatic stage for one of the city’s most talked-about restaurants, which is named after the island. “We sell out almost all our tables for the entire summer in a day,” said Brian Boswijk, a cofounder with the chef Sander Overeinder. Boswijk has been involved in some of Amsterdam’s most celebrated alternative restaurants, from the roving supper club Interdit to the pop-up restaurant 11.

On a perfect June day, I waited to be picked up by *Yveer XIII*, the 1927 wood ferryboat the restaurant uses to transport diners to and from the island. It was a delightful voyage. I could see a field of grass dotted with sheep. A pair of falcons drifted over the lighthouse. Upon disembarking, the dinner guests were led along a path to an open-sided structure, angular and Nordic-looking, made of wood and glass. This was where we were to dine. Five nights a week, when the weather is good, Overeinder delivers a four-course menu; ingredients for some of the dishes are foraged or grown on the island, then prepared over an open fire. That night, Boswijk told me that he never expected such immediate success with this culinary venture but has an inkling as to why Vuurtoreneiland is so popular: “It’s not just a meal but a small journey. You feel the wind and hear the birds.” ➤

THE DETAILS

HOTELS

Hotel de Hallen Kick back in the spacious rooms in this renovated 1902 tram depot. hoteldehallen.com; doubles from €150.

Morgan & Mees A chic, nine-room inn tucked above a buzzing restaurant and bar. morganandmees.com; doubles from €150.

Volkshotel Housed in the former offices of the *Volkskrant* daily newspaper, this hip bolt-hole has a nightclub and views of the city from the rooftop terrace. volkshotel.nl; doubles from €60.

RESTAURANTS & BARS

Bak This former pop-up now has a permanent home serving monthly fixed menus with dishes like eggplant with cherries and foraged wildflowers. bakrestaurant.nl; prix fixe €45.

Café de Ceuvel A mixed-use space popular for its fresh salads sourced from an on-site garden and pizza from a wood-burning oven. cafedeceuvel.nl; mains €7–€15.

Café Modern A small, French-inspired kitchen with an affordable but ambitious fixed menu.

modernamsterdam.nl; prix fixe from €40.

Foodhallen This modern food market offers everything from decadent burgers at the Butcher to éclairs at Petit Gâteau. foodhallen.nl.

Hotel de Goudfazant A pioneering bistro in a massive, stylishly reinvented hangar on the water in Amsterdam-Noord. hoteldegoudfazant.nl; mains €20.

Maxwell Café An all-day coffeehouse perfect for an espresso or a glass of wine. maxwellcafe.nl; mains €15–€20.

Vuurtoreneiland A wildly popular culinary

adventure that comes with its own boat ride to a protected island on the IJmeer. vuurtoreneiland.nl; prix fixe €56.

Waterkant An inventive restaurant on the Singelgracht inspired by the city’s Surinamese population. waterkantamsterdam.nl; mains €10–€15.

ACTIVITIES

Arcam This architecture foundation publishes several excellent walking and biking maps of lesser-known and developing neighborhoods. arcam.nl.

Eye Film Institute It’s worth the five-minute

ferry ride to this film museum and architectural icon for the excellent exhibitions and film screenings. eyefilm.nl.

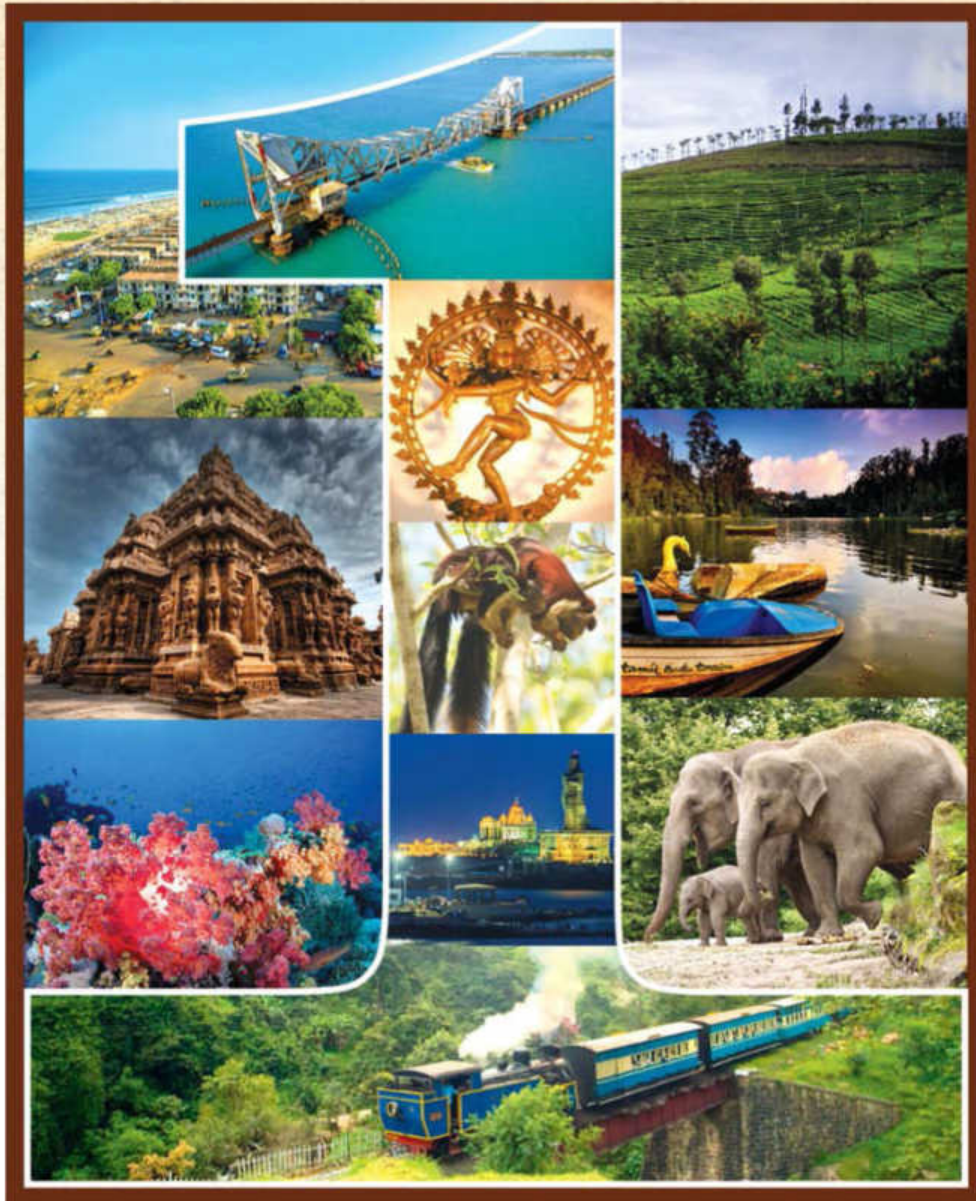
Tropenmuseum Programming at this ethnographic institution examines issues faced by developing nations, LGBT communities and more. tropenmuseum.nl.

TRAVEL GUIDE

Lilian Tilmans creates custom Amsterdam adventures and can organize face-to-face meetings with some of the city’s innovators and designers. amsterdampersonalized.com.

ENCHANTED WITH TAMILNADU

Tamilnadu emerges as the top tourist destination in India this year.



DIPR/1621/Display/2015

327.6 million domestic tourists and 4.66 million foreign tourists made Tamilnadu the most sought after destination this year. To them we would like to say, "Nandri. Meendum Varuga." (Thank you. Visit Again)

You too can join them and get enchanted. The world's finest beaches, vast wildlife sanctuaries, romantic hill stations, beautiful getaway spots, historic monuments, magnificent temples and pilgrimage spots are waiting for you.

Tamil Nadu Tourism

Commissionerate of Tourism, Tamil Nadu Tourism Complex, No. 2, Wallajah Road, Chennai - 600 002.

Tamil Nadu, India. Ph: 91-44-2533 3555. Fax: 91-44-2533 3772. Toll Free No. 1800 4253 1111

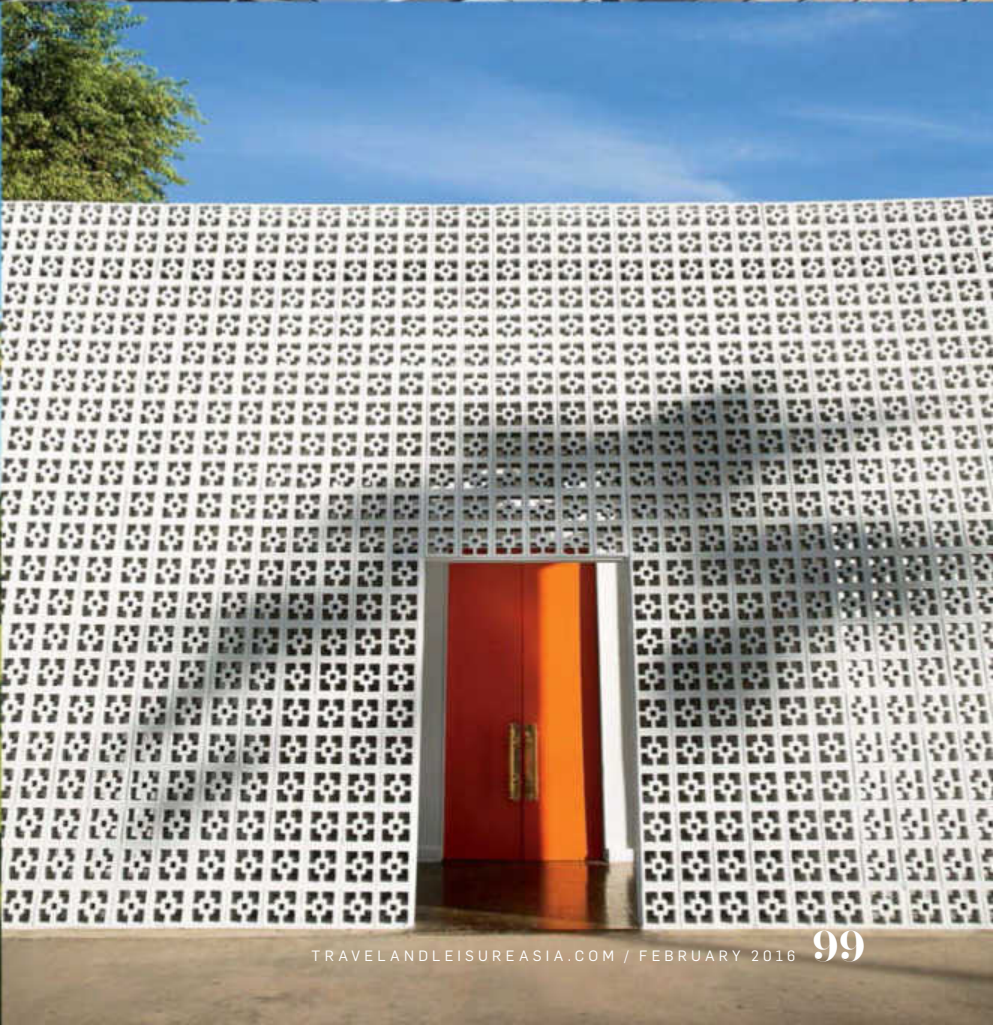
Website: www.tamilnadutourism.org E-mail: ttdc@vsnl.com For online booking log on to : www.ttdconline.com

THE ART OF THE MOMENT

What is it about Palm Springs that keeps drawing waves of pleasure-seekers looking to slow down, drop out, go a little wild? [Irina Aleksander](#) meets the latest arrivals who are reinventing the desert oasis all over again. | Photographed by [Chris McPherson](#)

The former estate of actor Bob Hope. CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: L'Horizon Resort & Spa; the brise-soleil at the Parker Palm Springs; the hotel grounds.





Palm Springs is reachable

by plane, but everyone will say that on your first visit you should probably drive. There are a few reasons, the primary one being the windmills. Right before you get off the I-10 highway, there are hundreds of them, maybe thousands. From afar they look like crosses on a hill, up close, like plane propellers on stilts. Driving through the wind farm, your car begins to rattle and sway, shoved around the road by the Santa Ana winds. Preset radio stations jam and turn to static. Soon, you're surrounded by 50-meter-tall, man-made machines planted like crops across a wide expanse of uninhabited desert. The sight, simultaneously ominous and beautiful, makes you hold your breath. But then you arrive in Palm Springs proper and exhale. Because here is the tranquil, hot valley—a strange little civilization inhabited by very tanned people who drive convertibles, reside in immaculate Midcentury Modern homes, and spend their days in pools with the same time



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The exterior of a room at L'Horizon; Canadian-transplant, photographer and Palm Springs small-business owner Jaime Kowal; the El Diablo cocktail at Bootlegger Tiki; Jason Perry, the general manager at the Sparrows Lodge.





and devotion that people elsewhere commit to offices. The overall effect is like passing through a time warp and touching down in a colony left over from the 1950s.

"This is Mars," John says. I meet John in the shallow end of the pool at L'Horizon, a newly opened hotel along Palm Canyon Drive. John's hair and skin are golden, his teeth and tennis visor very white. John works in men's apparel and is one-fourth of two couples that drove in from L.A. on a steamy weekend. The women in John's group are both named Stephanie. One of the Stephanies is wearing an orange bathing suit and reading a pink book. (Upon closer examination: Candace Bushnell's *Killing Monica*.) This Stephanie moved to L.A. from Wall Street a year ago. "And this is our fourth time here," she coos from her lounge chair.

John and Stephanie are part of what the locals are calling the renaissance of Palm Springs. Once a sanctuary for the Hollywood set, the city is again attracting the sorts of people who have the unique power to christen destinations and lead their followers into the desert. Two years ago Leonardo DiCaprio bought a home here. Last May, Nicolas

Ghesquière, the creative director of Louis Vuitton, staged the brand's resort show at Bob Hope's former estate. That same weekend Thomas Middleditch, the star of HBO's *Silicon Valley*, was seen lounging by the pool at the Parker Palm Springs. Days before I arrive, Tavi Gevinson Instagrams photos from the Saguaro, a remodeled Holiday Inn. Barack Obama has been several times in the past year and, if you believe the murmurs of the local real estate agents, is looking to buy.

The only thing more fun than imagining all those people lounging around a pool together is considering what brought them here. Palm Springs is, after all, a town of retired showgirls and studio execs, of golf in the afternoon and oysters Rockefeller at dinner, of Robert Downey Jr.'s drug arrests and Lindsay Lohan's trips to the nearby Betty Ford Center—a throwback to a time when people left the breezy coastline for a seductive desert town where they could disappear, rest and be cured by the sun.

"I could never find a place to stay before," John says. But now, with many hotels sold out on weekends, new ones have risen. L'Horizon is the work of Steve Hermann, who's designed homes for the Saudi royals. Further down the road is V Palm Springs, part-owned by Mark Geragos, the Armenian-American lawyer once employed by Michael Jackson. On the other side of town, Arrive Palm Springs, a boutique hotel bankrolled by Ezra Callahan, the millionaire Facebook alum, is opening this year.

On my first day, I check in to Sparrows Lodge, a lush compound of rustic cabins for the unfussy traveler who has a fussy taste for aesthetics. (There are no phones or TVs, but birds on everything: tissue boxes, hangers, Q-tip packs.) "Definitely a more youthful and affluent person is coming to Palm Springs," says Jason Perry, the hotel's general manager. "It's someone who might spend time in an exotic place in Europe, but they choose to come here because it has a cool factor now."

PALM SPRINGS CAME ABOUT as the antidote to Hollywood. In the 1920s, when studios controlled actors with lengthy contracts and strict morality clauses, the stars needed a place to get away and let loose. Palm Springs was close enough not to violate the "two-hour rule"—the leashlike range actors were allowed to wander from studio lots—with a tiny population made up mostly of Cahuilla Indians and TB patients seeking relief in the dry heat. In 1934, the actors Charlie Farrell and Ralph Bellamy opened the Charles Farrell Racquet Club, and soon the rest of Hollywood followed, building home after home in what became known as the Movie Colony.

This story is told to me by a man named Paul. Paul used to run Club Trinidad, a Rat Pack hangout; now he gives tours of the city in his Chrysler Sebring convertible for US\$45. Bald, sturdy and smelling of aftershave, Paul has the look of a retired mobster: khakis, loafers and a big gold pinkie ring. We drive around with the top down and the AC blasting as Paul shows me homes that belonged to Jerry Lewis, Clark Gable, Liz Taylor, Kirk Douglas and Liberace. He points to a large hillside estate. "That's Suzanne Somers's house," Paul says. "She invented the Thighmaster and made a million dollars. Now she has a line of cosmetics. A very productive lady!"

The most striking thing about Palm Springs isn't its celebrities but the homes they've built here. Between the 1940s and 60s, the area became a staging ground for Modernist architects, drawn by wealthy clients and the unusual lunar terrain. Richard Neutra, William Cody, John Lautner, Albert Frey and Donald Wexler



Palm Springs is like
a beach city with
no beach

A view of the San Jacinto Mountains from the Parker.
OPPOSITE: Afternoon at the Parker pool, where the waitresses wear white tennis skirts and yellow polos that read LEMONHEAD.



imposed a sharp geometry onto the landscape that we've come to know as Desert Modernism: flat roofs, glass walls, free-form pools. It could have all been bulldozed in the 1970s, but then the recession hit and no one bothered. In the 80s, the city became a sleepy retirement community, aided by then-mayor Sonny Bono, who made everything fun illegal, including G-strings. (Really.)

In the 1990s, at the height of the AIDS crisis, gay men—now estimated to account for a third of the city's population—migrated to Palm Springs and began remodeling houses. When Midcentury design came back in style, it turned out the city had the world's largest collection. Palm Springs Modernism Week now attracts close to 60,000 people. More crowds began coming for the Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival, which started in 1999. The conservative-standard-bearing Koch brothers, meanwhile, have held right-wing political summits here since 2013, perhaps nostalgic for the years that Ronald Reagan spent at Sunnylands.

Today's Palm Springs is a blend of its past and present. Drop by Sherman's Deli & Bakery and you're likely to encounter vacationing families and transient biker gangs; Native American businessmen and swarms of Germans, Norwegians and Swedes escaping harsh winters back home; retired heiresses and modern tech moguls. "You have the gays, the grays and everyone in between," says Patrick Jordan, a real estate broker who shows me Bob Hope's Lautner-designed spaceship of a house—currently on sale for US\$25 million—perched high above the city.

IF THE NEW PALM SPRINGS has a set of ambassadors, they might be the three J's. They don't call themselves the three J's, but I meet them in a single day and the mnemonic device helps me remember their names. There is Jason Perry, the 29-year-old Sparrows manager, who introduces me to his friend, Jordan Fife. Fife grew up in Palm Springs, but left to work in the entertainment industry. He worked on a movie called *Bride Wars* starring Kate Hudson. ("It ended up being terrible and broke my soul," he says.) So eventually he came back. Now he's the director of development for Steve Hermann Hotels. Fife has the windmills tattooed on his right thigh, above an Alfred Tennyson quote: "They came unto a land in which it seemed always afternoon."

"Palm Springs is like a beach city with no beach," Perry says, explaining the allure.

"We like to consider ourselves the Hamptons of L.A.," Fife adds.

Through Perry and Fife, I meet the third J, Jaime Kowal, a 37-year-old Canadian photographer who came here on vacation three years ago and never left. Now Kowal is the proprietor of several popular Palm Springs businesses, including the Amado hotel, Ernest Coffee and Bootlegger Tiki, a cocktail lounge she calls a *Tikeasy*. "There's a freedom to living in the desert," Kowal says. "There's no traffic. The parking is free. Life is easy here."

So great is Kowal and her friends' commitment to Palm Springs that they jokingly call themselves "the Family." Their latest recruit is Athalie Laguerre, an early Facebook employee and an investor in Arrive who came to visit in 2014. Within a month, Laguerre bought a home near Kowal's and then decided to open an artisanal ice cream shop in town. She now splits her time between the two coasts in Palm Springs and Brooklyn.

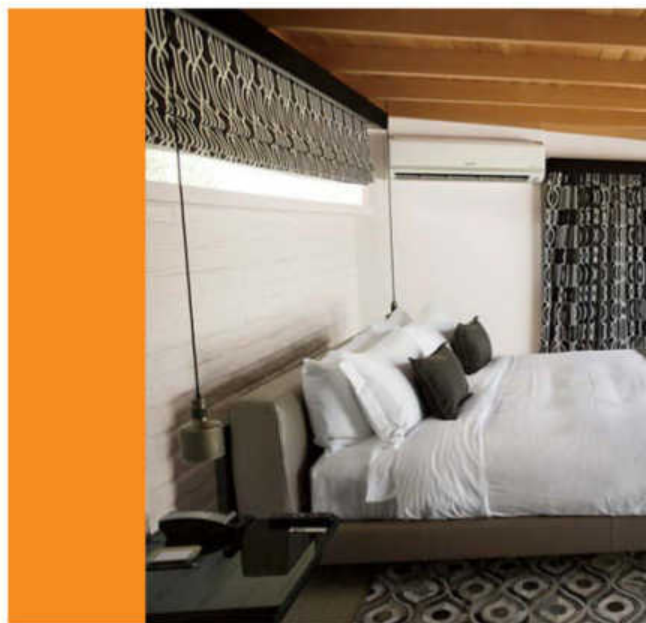
I ask Kowal, the Family's unofficial leader, why there's a sudden interest in Palm Springs. "It's like when there's a really good party going on," she says, sipping, without apparent irony, a drink called Tardy to the Party. "You want to know who's there and what they are

talking about. Like, you have your nose pressed to the window." In other words: FOMO.

LIKE ANYWHERE ELSE, Palm Springs has its rhythms. At times, it can feel like an old European resort where everyone is on the same daily conga line. Mornings are for brunch at Cheeky's (if you're the farm-to-table type) or Sherman's (if you want a pile of lox); maybe you go on a hike or take a stroll downtown and inevitably someone buys a sarong at Trina Turk; as the heat climbs, you retreat to the pool in said sarong and befriend the other pool people; in the afternoon everyone hides out in air-conditioning for spa treatments, aloe vera application and naps; once the temperatures drop, you go for drinks or dinner with the people you met by the pool. Rinse, repeat.

The heat in Palm Springs is unlike that of anywhere else in the United States. Not only is it dry, but the sun here gives your skin a leathery, parched tint. It doesn't so much tickle your bare ankles as lightly sizzle them. At first, your body rebels—mine broke out in a heat rash—but then your muscles relax and tension thaws. As Zeb Newman, a part-time resident and a producer on *The Late Late Show with James Corden*, tells me, "I like the oppressive heat. I'm so fast in my life that it forces me to slow down."

Because of its climate, Palm Springs has typically been a seasonal destination. Its population surges December through April and clears out by May. "But this summer has been on fire," says John Paschal, a celebrity photographer and 20-year resident. I meet





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
A house designed
by the Midcentury
Modern architect
Donald Wexler;
outside the Parker,
which was decorated
by Jonathan Adler;
the pool at the Amado
hotel; a room at
L'Horizon, designed
by Steve Hermann;
Athalie Laguerre, an
early Facebook
employee and investor
in Arrive hotel.



Paschal at the opening of his new restaurant, Eight4Nine, a large space with white patent-leather banquettes and fuchsia Louis XVI chairs. (A month later, Bravo's reality show *Shahs of Sunset* will film an episode here.)

Among the guests is Bobbie Eakes, a former *All My Children* star who tells me she gets through the summers with a season pass to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, which travels to the top of Mount San Jacinto, where it is dramatically cooler.

Much of Palm Springs is in fact designed to help visitors cope with the heat. Uptown art galleries are aggressively air-conditioned. Restaurants are equipped with mist-producing awnings that function like irrigation systems for humans. Though there are fun décor stores like A La Mod and Modern Way, the most populated are the hat stores offering every imaginable sun-shielding contraption: baseball caps, panama hats, fedoras, straw sunbonnets, tennis visors, etc.

There are as many pool scenes in Palm Springs as there are neighborhoods in New York, and each one inevitably defines who you are. The Ace Hotel is basically a nightclub: there are DJs, pool parties, beards. Sparrows' pool is for a more civilized but no less hip crowd. (On a Friday there's a gentleman named Gavin with a man-bun.) At the Parker, waitresses in tennis skirts serve frozen drinks to agents speed-reading scripts. L'Horizon, meanwhile, has the allure of the buzzy new arrival. Not far from John and the Stephanies is a couple from Marin County. Brad wears Oakley sunglasses and Bose headphones. Elaine is reading *The Corrections*. The waiter offers a brandy made by Steven Soderbergh and they seem genuinely impressed. "It's safe to say we're going to try everything," Brad says.

True to its name, L'Horizon is a forecast of what's coming. With rates starting at US\$605 a night, it is Palm Springs' most expensive hotel; its restaurant, SO.PA, is led by Giacomo Pettinari, an alum of El Bulli. Hermann, the hotel's owner, is very proud of these details. In one of the suites, he points out the Forbes & Lomax light switches, the hand-sewn hide rugs, and Le Labo toiletries. "All our sheets are Frette," he announces. "We have Frette robes, Frette slippers, Frette towels. Everything that is fabric is Frette. And not just Frette—but top-of-the-line Frette."

After touring L'Horizon, I want to see the other Palm Springs, and so I drag Fife to Melvyn's, the restaurant opened in 1975 by Mel Haber, a transplant from Flatbush, Brooklyn. Palm Springs has plenty of interesting dining options—most notably, Birba, Cheeky's

Italian-themed cousin, and the modern Workshop Kitchen & Bar, where the walls are concrete and fries are cooked in duck fat. But Melvyn's is the desert's version of Brighton Beach kitsch. There are tuxedo-clad waiters; a piano lounge called Casablanca; and retirees in ascots dining alongside younger people like Fife, who wears a fedora. We order the steak Diane and watch a woman in a pink halter top entertaining two older gentlemen at the bar. "Her name is Sherrie," Fife guesses. "Definitely a Sherrie or a Marcia. Marcia used to be a party girl, but now she just enjoys Chardonnay." As we leave, Sherrie/Marcia is dragging her silver foxes onto the dance floor to the tune of "Sweet Caroline."

The magic of Palm Springs is brewed from these contradictions. You can have a shrimp cocktail at Melvyn's or "compressed melon salad" at SO.PA. It welcomes travelers who enjoy—or simply want to observe—the wealth and debauchery of the Hollywood set, and health tourists who come for the climate. It's a place to be seen and to get away.

By week's end, I opt for the latter. Overstimulated by Palm Springs' constant sun and scene, I drop by Two Bunch Palms, a sprawling, gated resort in nearby Desert Hot Springs where Tim Robbins's character came to hide out in Robert Altman's *The Player*. At Two Bunch, mobile-phone use is discouraged and everyone pads around in robes. The main attraction is the grotto, filled with lithium-rich mineral waters thought to have therapeutic, mood-enhancing properties. I sign up for the Watsu—a water shiatsu—in a small pool under a tiki hut, where a Swiss woman named Susanne drags me around by my limbs until I'm lulled into a meditative state. As I get on the road, sitting upright feels like a chore. The sun is just beginning to dip behind the windmills, which, it occurs to me, have been spinning tirelessly this entire time, ushering new arrivals into the desert. ☺

THE DETAILS

HOTELS

L'Horizon Celebrity designer Steve Hermann has reimaged poolside bungalows by renowned Midcentury architect William Cody. *lhorizonpalmsprings.com*; doubles from US\$605.

Parker Palm Springs A lush compound with playful Jonathan Adler-designed rooms. *parkerpalmsprings.com*; doubles from US\$425.

Sparrows Lodge Modern rustic cabins for laid-back but aesthetically inclined travelers. *sparrowslodge.com*; doubles from US\$199.

Two Bunch Palms A tranquil hideaway in nearby Desert Hot Springs with restorative, lithium-rich waters. *twobunchpalms.com*; doubles from US\$239.

RESTAURANTS & BARS

Birba A busy garden eatery with a well-priced farm-to-table Italian menu. *birbaps.com*; mains US\$10–23.

Bootlegger Tiki A dimly lit "Tikeasy" bar owned by photographer Jaime Kowal. *bootleggertiki.com*.

Melvyn's Come for the flambé bananas and tuxedo-clad waiters; stay for

dancing in the Casablanca lounge. *inglesideinn.com*; mains US\$23–43.

SO.PA Giacomo Pettinari, an alum of Spain's El Bulli, mans L'Horizon's open-air restaurant. *lhorizonpalmsprings.com*; mains US\$27–55.

Workshop Kitchen & Bar A minimal space where the fries are cooked in duck fat. *workshoppalmsprings.com*; mains US\$22–37.

SHOPS

A La Mod Much of the merchandise, like Lucite lighting and other vintage pieces, is locally sourced. *alamod768.com*.

Just Modern An assortment of Midcentury Modern home décor, knickknacks and furnishings. *justmoderndecor.com*.

Trina Turk The designer's flagship store is a mecca for vibrant desert-chic prints. *trinaturk.com*.

ACTIVITIES

Palm Springs Aerial Tramway Take the tram up about 2,440 meters and hike Mount San Jacinto; temperatures are significantly cooler than on the desert floor. *pstramway.com*.

KOH SAMUI

W
KOH SAMUI
RETREAT

A **24/7** ESCAPE. TRANQUIL BY DAY. ELECTRIC BY NIGHT. SITUATED BETWEEN MAENAM AND BO PHUT, IT HAS THE FINEST AND MOST PRISTINE BEACH LOCATION IN THAILAND, OVERLOOKING STUNNING BEACHES AND LUSH FORESTS, **W RETREAT KOH SAMUI** AWAKENS AS THE SUN GOES DOWN, IGNITING THE UNEXPECTED.

ILLUMINATING.. ENVIRONS. TAKE IT EASY. SURROUNDED BY VERDANT FOLIAGE, EACH OF OUR **74 PRIVATE-POOL RETREATS** BOASTS A PRIVATE OUTDOOR POOL AND INFINITE ISLAND VIEWS. INSIDE, PREMIER TECHNOLOGY MEETS **W SIGNATURE BED, BLISS® SPA** AMENITIES AND **WHATEVER/WHENEVER®** SERVICE.

W RETREAT KOH SAMUI
T 66 77 915 999 / F 66 77 915 998
EXPLORE WHAT'S NEW / NEXT
WRETREATKOHSAAMUI.COM
WHOTELS.COM/KOHSAAMUI

spg.
Starwood
Preferred
Guest

LE MERIDIEN

aloft

FOUR
POINTS

WESTIN

THE LUXURY
COLLECTION

W
HOTELS

Sheraton

ST REGIS

element

©2012 Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Preferred Guest, SPG, Aloft, Element, Four Points, Le Meridien, Sheraton, St. Regis, The Luxury Collection, W, Westin and their logos are the trademarks of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc., or its affiliates.

For centuries, the search for the Northwest Passage captivated explorers—and led many to their deaths.

Today, warming seas have made it possible to traverse the fabled route through the Canadian Arctic.

Saki Knafo climbs aboard one of the first passenger ships in the region to survey this emerging frontier.

Photographed by **Stefan Ruiz**



The passenger ship *Vavilov* navigates ice floes near Baffin Island, in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago.



testing **THE** *waters*



I don't think *I realized*

just how desperate we were to see polar bears until the trip was almost over. We'd been in the Arctic for nearly two weeks, and we'd hardly seen any animals at all, apart from a mound of fur that our leaders identified as a musk ox. A musk ox, I'll admit, is not something you see every day, but it's also not what you have in mind when you book an Arctic cruise. What you have in mind is polar bears.

I think our leaders understood this. I think that's why they steered our inflatable skiffs toward the mother bear and her cub as soon as we saw them off in the distance, two specks of white against the drab background of rock and sea. I think that's why we kept getting closer and closer even as they tried to swim away, crossing a cove and scrambling up a cliff. There were people on the cruise—a minority, to be sure—who later criticized the decision to follow them. Polar bears, they pointed out, often go up to a month without finding anything to eat and can ill afford to waste precious calories paddling away from people, even if those people aren't trying to kill them and only want to share pictures of them on Facebook.

But I'm not sure we had a choice. I am an American who spent two weeks on a ship filled mostly by Canadians. From that experience, I can confirm that Canadians really

are very polite. But if we hadn't seen any polar bears, I think there might have been a riot.

We were in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, a sprawl of more than 36,000 islands covering an area more than three times the size of California. Though we hadn't encountered any polar bears until now, we had observed many scenes of epic beauty: Gothic castles of ice that rose out of nowhere, royal blue mountains at midnight set against the lighter blue of sea and sky. For many years, this was one of the last places on the planet where a traveler could drop off the map. Starting in the 16th century, thousands of men tried to navigate what they called the Northwest Passage, a hypothetical route through a maze of icy channels from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Until Roald Amundsen in 1906, every one of them failed. Many vanished into the ice. Today, of course, it is the ice that is vanishing, which is why the Northwest Passage can now be navigated by cruise ships.

For generations of visitors, the Arctic ice was to be endured. But for the people and animals who have lived here for millennia, the ice is what makes endurance possible. In the winter, when the Arctic is white, it is also secretly green. Coating the underside of the sea ice is a film of algae, which feeds the krill that feed the fish that feed the seals that feed the polar bears. As a sightseer in the Northwest Passage, it is unsettling to realize that the thawing is the reason you're able to see the place at all and also the reason there's so little wildlife here to see.



Passengers aboard a rubber skiff in Disko Bay, off the western coast of Greenland. OPPOSITE: A bird-watching expedition near Prince Leopold Island.

Our ship, the *Vavilov*, was a repurposed Russian research vessel with seven decks, a manila-colored interior and very little charm. One Ocean Expeditions leases it year-round for tours of the Maritimes, the Falklands and South Georgia Island, as well as the Arctic and Antarctica during their brief seasons of relative mildness. This was not the sort of cruise that features the comforts and amusements usually associated with cruises. Instead, there were trips to shore, several a day, in rubber skiffs thumped by the waves. Long, cold walks along rocky shorelines littered with whale bones. Infinite gray landscapes interrupted by the luminous beauty of an iceberg or a tower of rock rising from a green bed of moss, its walls ablaze with bright orange lichen.

The *Vavilov* wasn't the first cruise ship ever to venture into the twisting corridors of the Northwest Passage, and despite the refusal of the polar bears to cooperate with our agenda, it won't be the last. Three decades have passed since a commercial vessel first completed the journey, but in the past five years, as warming seas have opened new routes through the ice, passenger ships have multiplied. Last summer alone, at least 25 cruises were offered in the Canadian Arctic, and as water temperatures continue to rise, that number is expected to grow. "We'll see large vessels like we haven't seen before," said Jackie Dawson, a geography professor at the University of Ottawa, who predicts that pleasure travel to the region will increase by 20 percent over the next 10 years. This summer, Crystal

Cruises plans to convey more than 1,000 souls through the Passage on the biggest luxury vessel ever to traverse the route. Even if they don't see any polar bears, they'll get to see a live production of *My Life: The Music of Billy Joel*.

Getting to the ship wasn't as difficult as you might think. I flew from New York to Ottawa, where the *Vavilov*'s 75 passengers first convened. We ate some poutine, slept in a hotel, and fired off a last e-mail, then flew to Greenland on Canadian North, an airline with polar bears painted on the tails of all its aircraft. A Danish expat gave us a bus tour of Kangerlussuaq, population 550. At the top of a mountain, I watched him wander off into the ankle-high shrubs and look out at the immense emptiness. Shivering in my fleece, I noted he was in only a T-shirt. I walked over and introduced myself. Without shifting his gaze, he imparted some advice. "Don't live here," he said, "unless you can be alone with your thoughts."

Aboard the ship, I glanced over the itinerary. Starting with a two-day crossing from Greenland to Canada, we'd be following the path of John Franklin, the British explorer who, in the spring of 1845, set sail for the Northwest Passage with 128 men and never returned. Throughout the 1800s, the British and American governments launched around 40 expeditions to find the lost explorers. In 2014, a team of Canadian divers succeeded in locating one of Franklin's two ships at the bottom of a channel. Stephen Harper, the recently deposed



An iceberg in
Disko Bay, near
the Greenlandic
town of Ilulissat.





Conservative prime minister, declared the discovery a “truly historic moment for Canada.”

As our ship pulled out of Baffin Bay, I stood at the bow and gazed at the endless sweep of gray to the west, experiencing the kind of wonder we feel as kids, when the world is new and vast and full of mystery. It wasn’t until three monotonous days later that I found myself thinking, *Now I understand why sailors drink.*

It’s a mistake to characterize the Arctic as barren. Certainly, the Inuit people, who have lived there for millennia, do not consider it “empty.” If you’re from there, the land must be full of stories. But to an outsider, its wonders reveal themselves slowly. To stave off boredom, we’d have to amuse one another. “We” included all the courteous Canadians, an American couple with two teenage boys and four supersize Nikons, and a frizzy-haired sculptor who said that her Catskills estate was home to more than 80 pets, including peacocks, Angora rabbits and an owl. Then there were the Scots, of whom I was particularly fond. They were very clear about what they wanted to accomplish on the trip. They wanted to drink all the whiskey on the boat.

I myself drank an inordinate amount of whiskey with Robin Esrock, a South African TV personality and author of the Bucket List adventure-travel books, which he kept out on a table at the bar in case anyone felt the urge to do a little onboard shopping. He told me he sought to write stories that played to people’s desire to “feel good about the

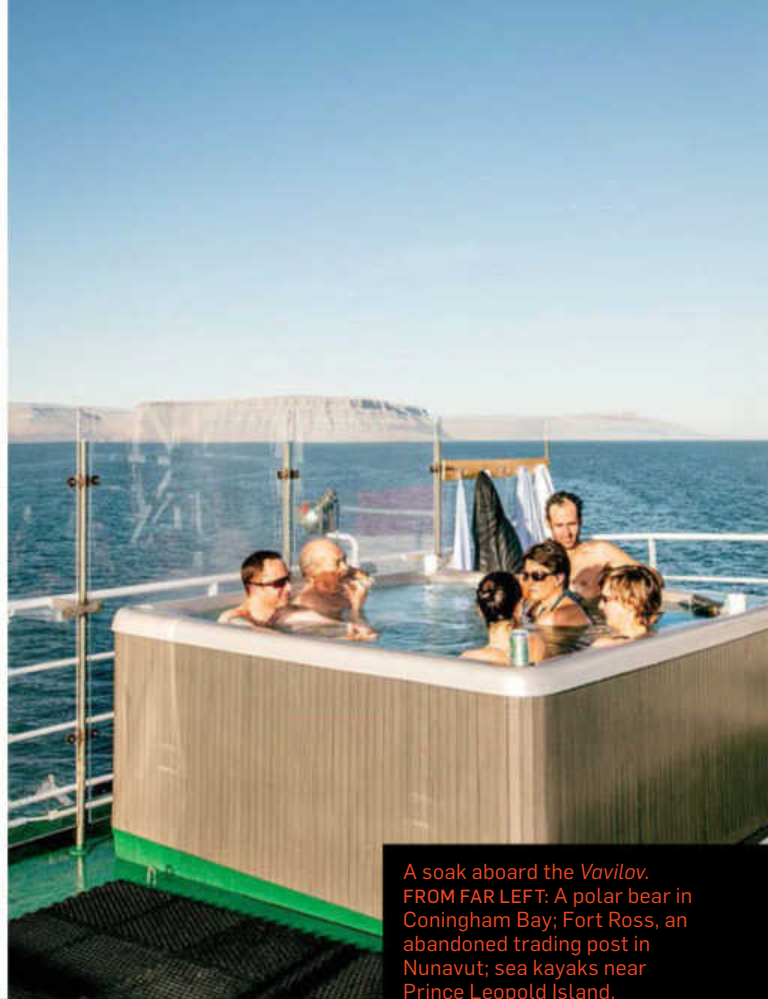
world.” And yet I found he’d taken an interest in the least reassuring part of John Franklin’s unhappy tale.

One evening, he brought up the subject of the human remains, presumed to belong to Franklin’s crew, that were found in 1981 on a particularly inhospitable island we’d pass later on. “Why were there incision marks on their chests?” he asked. “Were they trying to get to the organ meat or what? And why did they cut off the fingers?”

Barbara, one of the Scots, nodded appreciatively over her glass of Talisker, a philosopher savoring a curious riddle. “You’d think they’d be a bit tough,” she observed.

Our leaders, genial kayaker types, didn’t spend much time discussing the cannibalism part of Franklin’s story, or any of the other topics that might harsh the vibe, like Canada’s subjugation of the Inuit, or, you know, climate change. At every breakfast, lunch and dinner, one of our guides, a manly Canadian dude with a blond ponytail, stood up in the dining hall and delivered a wide-eyed recap of whatever adventure we’d just come back from, never failing to assure us that it had been “absolutely beautiful” or “absolutely awesome.” Once, he proclaimed the morning “absolutely spectacular.” We’d spent it scrabbling over some rocks and taking pictures of lichen.

One day a voice came over the loudspeaker announcing the musk-ox sighting. No one will admit to playing favorites, but, trust me, everyone does, and in the hierarchy of Arctic animals, the musk ox ranks well behind the polar bear, the walrus, the narwhal, the beluga whale, the



A soak aboard the *Vavilov*.
FROM FAR LEFT: A polar bear in
Coningham Bay; Fort Ross, an
abandoned trading post in
Nunavut; sea kayakers near
Prince Leopold Island.

bowhead whale and the arctic wolf. Still, we dutifully changed into our waterproof, ship-issued uniforms—red jackets, red overalls—and took off in the skiffs.

What followed resembled nothing so much as a military operation. Our guides spread across the shore, each carrying a rifle or a shotgun to protect us. The musk ox, to be clear, did not seem very threatening, perhaps because we could barely see it, standing, as we were, a 100 meters away. We were instructed to move toward it shoulder to shoulder, a wall of red encroaching on the target like British soldiers in the American Revolution.

We advanced toward the musk ox. We took pictures of the musk ox. We watched the musk ox plod away.

We advanced toward the musk ox, again. We took pictures of the musk ox, again. We watched the musk ox plod away, again.

On returning to the ship, we learned that the father of the Nikon family had stayed on board with his giant lens, capturing images of the musk ox that put ours to shame.

After two days at sea, we arrived at Pond Inlet, an Inuit settlement on the northern edge of Baffin Island, a landmass 16 times the size of Belgium. A woman came down to the beach to greet us in her traditional sealskin *amauti*. We gathered around her, taking pictures and asking questions.

“How did you make the parka?”

“I ordered it from a place in Manitoba.”

“How about your earrings?”

“Amazon.”

We followed her up the winding dirt road past the ramshackle wooden houses, many of them boarded up. The homes were gray and unpainted, sheets of insulation and aluminum shingles peeling from the walls and roofs. A pair of dead seals lay in someone’s front yard. At the cultural center, a cavernous auditorium with bare walls, a few vendors sold knitted hats and trinkets carved from antler bone.

Fifty years ago, this settlement consisted of little more than a police station and a trading post. Back then, the Inuit lived “out on the land,” as they say. In the spring, they hunted for seals. In the summer, they followed the herds of caribou. They did this for centuries. From a modern perspective it all sounds very romantic, but starvation was a real danger. In the 1960s, the government in Ottawa decided that the Inuit needed to entrust their fate to the government in Ottawa. People were paid to move into settlements. Those who resisted were threatened with jail time. Children were removed from their families and placed in residential schools where they were forbidden from speaking Inuktitut. In a single generation, the people of Pond Inlet went from surviving by their wits and skills to depending on the assistance of Canadian bureaucrats.

Outside the cultural center, I spoke with a young woman who described herself as one of the few people

from Pond Inlet who had ever left the area—who had ever been in an elevator or seen a tree. It's not that people don't want to leave, she said. It's that the sheer remoteness of the place makes it nearly impossible. A one-way plane ticket to Ottawa costs more than US\$3,000. One exit strategy is to get sick. There is no doctor in the village, so if you have a health problem that the nurse can't treat, the government will fly you down to a hospital in the south. People often bring along an empty suitcase. If they survive, they load up on Nikes, DVDs and other goods, saving the expense of using the Northern Shopper, a company that forwards packages to Inuit villages.

Before coming to the Arctic, I'd perused several books about the Franklin expedition. I'd learned how the crew had set out from England equipped with the very finest in Victorian technology, confident that the ice would prove no match for steam propellers and tinned pork. No one knows exactly how they died, but the knife marks on their bones suggest that things got very desperate before death claimed the last survivor.

I was surprised by how few people on the ship seemed to share my fascination with this story. Why, then, were our leaders so intent on steering us down Franklin's ill-chosen path? The explanation came at dinner one night when the down-to-earth expedition chief, a stocky outdoorsman named Aaron Lawton, appeared in the mess hall. Looking slightly embarrassed in a formal khaki shirt, he presented medals to several crew members. In 2014, he explained, One Ocean Expeditions had played a supporting role in the search for the Franklin ships.

Watching the ceremony, I remembered that Stephen Harper, an aggressive champion of oil exploration in the Arctic, had been quarrelling with the United States and Russia over control of the region and the right to mine and drill it. At the center of the dispute was the Northwest Passage and, more to the point, the enormous wealth it is bound to produce now that the loss of ice is creating new opportunities for oil companies, freighters, and yes, cruise lines. Even though Franklin had been British, Harper claimed that the discovery of his ship helped establish Canada's claim to Arctic sovereignty. The *Vavilov*, I realized as another crew member stood to accept a medal, had sailed into the stormy seas of an international power struggle.

Later that evening, our leaders called us to the top deck. Despite the hour, the sky was still bright. Warming our hands on mugs of coffee, we watched as the *Vavilov* approached two spits of land that reached out from either side of the Bellot Strait. On the left was Zenith Point, the northernmost point of the North American mainland. On the right was the southern tip of Somerset Island. For now, we were on the Atlantic side of the Arctic Ocean. Once we passed through the slender waist of the channel, we'd be on the Pacific side. The heart of the Northwest Passage would be behind us.

The scenery really was very beautiful. Even if you didn't know anything about the significance of the place,

you would have felt lucky to watch it glide past. Chunks of ice floated in the calm channel, and the currents that had carried them here had also brought a surprising abundance of wildlife—ivory-billed gulls bobbing on the water, seals poking their heads up for air. The sun dipped behind the bluffs off the starboard deck, painting the rocks and the water in shades of copper and rose.

Behind me, a huddle of Canadians launched into the chorus of one of their folk songs. I caught myself feeling a little patriotic, somehow, for Canada. And then a cry rose up: "Polar bear!"

It had been just a few hours since we'd seen the mother and cub. Now another bear was watching us from the shore, close enough that we didn't need binoculars.

And then, amazingly, there was another one. And another. After seeing them for so long only in our fantasies, it felt as if we'd slipped into a dream.

In a few days, we would arrive in Cambridge Bay, an Inuit hamlet across the Arctic from our starting point in Kangerlussuaq. We'd take one last look at the barren landscape, perhaps a little less inclined now to think of it as barren. We'd get on another plane with a bear on its tail.

But now we'd reached the climax. We had come to the invisible border separating the beginning of the Passage from the end. I knew that I shouldn't have cared about this. I knew that the heroic quest for the Passage was a self-serving narrative promulgated first by British conquerors and then by the Canadian government, and that we were here only because of the destruction of the ice that makes the Arctic what it is. I knew I shouldn't have felt my heart pump harder as I looked out at the sea and thought about all those people, Franklin among them, who'd tried and failed to reach this corner of the world.

And yet, I did. I think we all did. The channel opened wide, and we were in a gleaming bay, and the pearly sea matched the sky so perfectly it looked like we were sailing off the edge of the earth. 📍

THE DETAILS

GETTING THERE

Most Northwest Passage cruises depart from airports in Canada or Alaska. Though the cost of many trips doesn't include airfare, charter flights and airport transfers are often provided.

CRUISES

Adventure Canada This operator's two Northwest Passage tours include perks like barbecues and afternoon teas. Once ashore, passengers can participate in a variety of wilderness excursions and activities. adventurecanada.com; from US\$7,995.

Crystal Cruises The largest luxury passenger ship ever to sail through the Northwest Passage arrives this summer. The voyage

departs from Anchorage and ends in New York City. crystalcruises.com; from US\$21,755.

One Ocean Expeditions Choose from an array of activities, from wildlife encounters to history lessons. oneoceanexpeditions.com; from US\$5,195.

Polar Cruises Agency offering a range of Northwest Passage trips through various operators including One Ocean Expeditions. polarcruises.com.

Quark Expeditions The Arctic Circumnavigation tour is the most ambitious Northwest Passage cruise offered. It lasts 75 days, with 18 in the Passage. quarkexpeditions.com; from US\$83,995.

Discover il Lido Today

Savour the finest classic Italian cuisine
in Seminyak, Bali.

OPENS DAILY

11:30AM TO MIDNIGHT

Featuring an all-day menu of
classic Italian specialties,
finest wines and cocktails.

ilLiDO
RESTAURANT • BAR

BOOK A TABLE NOW

t 62.361.731175 • e info@illidobali.com • w www.illidobali.com
Jalan Raya Kerobokan NO38 • Banjar Taman • Bali 80361, Indonesia
Parking is available on our premises

wish you were here



Daniel Peckham / *The Peak* / **HONG KONG**

By their very nature, postcards are often clichéd shots of a destination. Thanks to the growing number of ways to take photographs combined with the fact that everyone now snaps away at will, classic tableaux now are continually being injected with new life. A case-in-point is this slightly off-kilter, city-defining image taken with a drone from just west of Victoria Peak, high above the towers and treetops. As densely packed with superlatives as with skyscrapers, not to mention citizens—some 7 million and counting—Hong Kong is made up largely of mountainous parks. While an estimated 40 percent of the city's total area is protected, green and serene, developed areas are, much like the denizens, in a constant state of motion. Every visit means a new look, each angle a renewed view of a metropolis that dates back to the Opium Wars but always seems to have its eye firmly fixed on the future. 📍



Infiniti Gets Prettier

You'll love our new bar with its novel stylish chairs and sassy Modern Asian style!

Our cliff-top location, open to cool breezes and with a dreamy view of the bay, is the ideal spot to enjoy the tantalizing Mediterranean cuisine, lunch or dinner.

Bar: 11:00 AM to midnight

Kitchen: 12:00 noon to 10:00 PM (last order)



For more information or reservations, contact 038 259 888
or info.pattaya@starwoodhotels.com

437 Phra Tamnak Road, Pattaya Chonburi 20150

www.sheratonpattayarresort.com | www.facebook.com/sheratonpattayarresort



ROLEX

OYSTER PERPETUAL YACHT-MASTER 40

ROLEX SERVICE CENTRES, SINGAPORE: (65) 6830 5100 MALAYSIA: (60-3) 2072 2709
THAILAND: (66-2) 650 9118 INDONESIA: (62-21) 2927 2793 VIETNAM: (84-8) 3520 3030 MYANMAR: (95-1) 538 163

WATCH FEATURED SUBJECT TO STOCK AVAILABILITY